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Liberation Schools: The Black Panther Party's Pursuit for Transgressive Education

Janayah Applon

Introduction

There is a common misconception that all information taught to students within classrooms is accurate. However, that misjudgment is highlighted when examining Florida governor Ron DeSantis's administration decision in 2023 to block AP African American Studies. It is important to note that Ron DeSantis offered to permit the course if certain information was taken out of the syllabus, like mentions of Black feminist authors, LGBTQ+ topics, and anything pertaining to critical race theory (Kim, 2023). Essentially, like many other powerful people in charge of the youth's education, DeSantis's decision illustrates resistance to teaching children real history that includes sensitive topics of how marginalized communities, more specifically how the Black community has been subjected to physical, psychological, and verbal terror for centuries. This intentional censorship of Black history negatively impacts Black youth because they aren't given proper representation of their identity or explained how they've landed where they are. But the lack of African American narration also impacts all children because in turn, the youth are given a limited lens and perspective which hinders their knowledge of how systemic racism is still affecting many communities.

In third grade, I recall being taught a sanitized version of the Civil Rights Movement. My teacher presented Martin Luther King Jr. as a hero with a happy ending and the 1964 Civil Rights Act as a feel-good story that led to the equality for Black people. In her lesson, my teacher didn't address slavery, the Reconstruction era, or the assassination of Dr. King Jr. In my home, the topic of racism was never explored, or at least not around me, therefore my only presentation on the subject of discrimination started in the classroom, and my teacher led me to believe that equality was achieved for my people. It wasn't until a year later that I watched the news of George Zimmerman's acquittal for the murder of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin that I was left to confront

the reality that racism never ceased. In the end, I was left feeling betrayed by my teacher who led me to believe the world finally saw humanity instead of commodity in Black bodies.

Decades prior to my own experience in school, the Black Panther Party creators Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton also noticed inconsistencies in the ways in which Black youth were being taught. In their ten-point program, which includes a list of needs for their community, the Panthers address the need for curriculum reform in point five. Point five of the ten-point program asserts wanting “education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American history,” and “education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.” (Newton, 1973). Instead of the Panthers waiting for the education system to change, they took initiative by creating their liberation schools for African American youth. The liberation school’s pedagogy centers around teaching children about the harm done by capitalism and about the Black diaspora, which differed from what traditional educational systems taught. The Panthers were able to establish several liberation schools, their first full-time school being the Intercommunal Youth Institute in 1971.

Based on my personal experiences in school and the blocking of African American Studies curriculum, it is undeniable that the white supremacy the Panthers noticed in the education system is still present in our institutions. However, with the understanding that the liberation schools were meant to alleviate the negative impacts of white supremacy on urban youth, the Panthers are a great example of how educators can pivot away from attacks on children’s education.

Literature Review

Examining the Black Panther Party’s critiques of the education system in the 1960s and 1970s suggests parallels with current efforts to censor Black history in America. This

literature

review explores several themes that emerge when evaluating the Panther's lived experiences and their liberation schools. The first theme covered in this literature review is an overview of some of the history of education in Black communities. Next, I will discuss the history of the Black Panther Party. Third, I address the development of their liberation schools. Lastly, I explore the intentions and goals of the liberation schools.

History of education in Black communities

Carter G. Woodson emphasizes that “There would be no lynchings if it did not start in the classrooms” (Woodson, 1900). Woodson's assertion is a broader critique of the 19th century education system. He argues that, by prioritizing white narratives, schools create space for anti-Black ideologies and violence to be normalized throughout society. Essentially, Woodson's insistence that violence to Black bodies begins in the classrooms solidifies that when educators don't illustrate proper representation of African Americans, individuals will perceive Black people as “other”, and in turn, will use the unfamiliarity to justify the commodification of African Americans. Additionally, in *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, Woodson coined the term “mis-education” to describe the consequences of Black students who are indoctrinated within the education system. To Woodson, when Black students are solely learning about the Greeks and Romans, African American youth begin to devalue their own culture while uplifting white historical figures (Woodson, 1900). In consequence, Black culture is then belittled by those within it. This connects to a psychological lynching because by excluding African Americans from the curriculum, their brain may subconsciously categorize African Americans as inferior.

Woodson argues that when individuals are being educated, the instruction should include the people who are learning (Woodson, 1900), emphasizing that educators should prioritize the students within their classrooms. For marginalized students, it is essential for educators to depict

how their ancestors have shaped history and how their actions still have an influence in present society. Otherwise, Woodson also notes that many students are at risk of “imitation resulting in the enslavement of his mind” (Givens, 2023, p. 97). When Woodson is describing “imitation” it is related to his earlier idea that when Black youth are taught white history with little Black representation, they begin to idolize white historical figures. In turn, Black youth try to mirror white heroes and are unaware of how institutions continually belittle Black bodies. Woodson also argues that this mimicry reinforces the criticism of Black youth. It is essential to acknowledge that Woodson himself dealt with traumas from his educational journey, and it was years after obtaining his PhD at Harvard that he was able to heal (Woodson, 1932). Woodson’s experiences in academia lend credibility to his discussion that the education curriculum should center on African American history.

It is critical to point out that African Americans have not stood idle during attempts to erase Black culture from historical textbooks. Black resistance to oppressive conditions results in what Carol Anderson calls White Rage (Anderson, 2016). White rage refers to a reaction from white individuals when marginalized communities receive what they perceive as “preferential treatment” within society. Anderson argues that White Rage emerges when Black excellence occurs (Anderson, 2016). In the case of education, White Rage arises when Black individuals push for the acknowledgement of African American culture within classrooms instead of assimilating to American culture that has a limited lens of marginalized communities. Therefore, it is not just the existence of Black people that gives rise to White Rage, but rather when ethnic groups push for the equality that white individuals believe marginalized communities have already acquired.

Bettina Love points out that White Rage is embedded in our institutions, which explains why white

supremacy is still prevalent (Love, 2025). Love's observation aligns with Woodson's concept of mis education, because when Black individuals speak out about the limited lens of African American identities in the school's curriculum, it is met with white rage, which highlights that white supremacy is embedded in the education system, resulting in Black children being subjected to an internal feeling of inferiority. This idea brings in the question of what role do white educators play as participants in the education system that continually excludes Black children while exuding White rage. Researchers Marcucci and Elmesky assert that "in 2022 white educators 'bonded with each other more quickly and effectively' when communication centered on racially stereotyping their students" (Elmesky & Marcucci, 2023). Marcucci's and Elmesky's findings illustrate that the problem of discrimination within the classroom is not just the curriculum, but teachers who project negative stereotypes on their marginalized students. These results also stress the importance of providing an inclusive curriculum that highlights the humanity of Black individuals because doing so can put into perspective for educators how systemic racism casts negative perceptions of African Americans and how these teachers must unlearn their discriminatory behavior in order create a safe space for their marginalized students to be given a proper education.

However, the discrimination students face within school systems results in not only a poor education but in poor wellbeing for youth, as well. Love refers to the school system as carceral

because "it is designed by the state to target the disposal of Black life. Black dreams of freedom, and Black creativity. But that threat can often look harmless, even to those of us in education" (Love, 2025, p. 153). This suggests that the education system is intentionally killing dreams of young Black students by erasing Black culture in curriculum. When students are not

shown Black heroes who have achieved success, but rather white figures who have accomplished milestones, the lack of a black role models and their symbol of success make it hard for Black youth to picture themselves becoming successful like their white counterparts, resulting in a psychological

impact on African American youth. When discussing the impact of racism, Professor Bridget Goosby goes beyond the psychological consequence, asserting that racism is not just an external battle, but rather that individuals develop trauma through constantly having to endure pain. Goosby notes that this can lead to suppression which is associated with “fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue, and other autoimmune diseases” (Love, 2025, p. 233). Goosby’s conclusion illustrates that psychological trauma regarding discrimination can manifest chronic physical conditions. Additionally, Patricia Williams asserts that “Racism literally murders your spirit,” and that “Racism is traumatic because it is a loss of protection, safety, and acceptance—all things children need to be educated” (Love, 2020, p. 38). Therefore, educators must actively recognize how racism not only can shift a child’s psychological but also physical wellbeing while giving Black youth reassurance that their identity is valued to prevent their health deteriorating.

To progress in society, we must start in the classroom. Progression requires giving marginalized communities a spotlight. Woodson argued that the whole curriculum of public schools needs to change (Woodson, 1900). While his critique is from the 19th century, the work of scholars like Bettina Love reflects a persistent lack of inclusion within classrooms. Aligning with Woodson’s claim, Love notes that “Any pedagogy that does not interrogate and challenge Whiteness is inadequate, especially since more than 80 percent of the teaching force is White” (Love, 2020). Therefore, to progress in society, educators must be willing to question how the material they present to and of marginalized communities challenge the

dominance of white supremacy in their institution. This is where the Black Panther Party and their liberation schools come in.

History and rise of the Black Panther Party

Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale were students at Merritt College when they created the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California, titling Seale as the Chairman and Newton as Minister

of Defense in 1966. In Newton's autobiography, *Revolutionary Suicide*, he discusses organizations at Merritt College that he participated in before establishing the BPP, such as the Soul Student Advisory Council (SSAC). Newton asserts that the SSAC "lacked depth" and the council hosted social events that didn't satisfy him (Newton, 1973). It is noteworthy to mention that the SSAC was connected to the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), which was a Black nationalist organization. Newton's dissatisfaction with SSAC stemmed from the lack of progression for Black individuals outside of the college realm that the organization achieved. In Seale's autobiography, *Seize the Time*, when addressing RAM, Seale states that he didn't have any faith in the group because he didn't think they would provide positive change necessary for Black individuals in their community (Seale, 1970). Implying that despite the organization's objectives that they advertised, the needs of the African American community were not properly addressed, like police brutality. For that reason, SSAC and RAM's insufficiency in creating solutions for the Black community is what prompted Newton and Seale to create the BPP. Subsequently, Newton and Seale observed how corruption in the police force endorsed for Black individuals to be brutalized. Their realization is what prompted Seale and Newton to initially title their organization the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense and aimed to protect the Black community from police brutality by patrolling the officers while armed (Newton, 1973).

After the creation of the Panthers, Newton and Seale developed a list consisting of needs for the Black community, which were aligned with the beliefs of the Black Panther Party. The list was referred to as the Black Panther Party's ten-point program. Seale comments that the needs of the ten-point program were "practical things we need and that should exist", and the belief portion "expressed philosophically, but concretely, what we believe" (Seale, 1970, p. 59). Essentially, the ten-point program illustrates the basic needs for the Black community, like proper housing, employment, accurate education, and an end to police brutality. Meanwhile the belief section

explains why the list of needs are necessary for African Americans to thrive in America. When addressing what needs are on their list, Seale states that the necessities are linked to what Black people had in Africa (Seale, 1970). Indicating that the BPP examined how the Transatlantic Slave Trade negatively impacted African Americans, creating racial disparities. Their ten-point program was invented as a foundation to mend discrimination Black individuals endure. Newton discloses that the BPP wanted to show poor people that violence isn't the only way they suffer, but through other ways like unemployment, housing insecurity, and subpar education (Newton, 1973). Newton is insisting that systemic racism is not limited to brutal experiences imposed on African Americans.

Additionally, Kathleen Cleaver, the National Communications Secretary for the BPP, exclaims that the ten-point program was "clear and simple" and that "Anyone can understand it. If you can read at a fifth-grade level, you can read the Black Panther Party Program" (Seale & Shames, 2016, p. 17). Indicating that the ten-point program was meant to be accessible to everyone in the Black community, not just educated individuals, which contrasts with the lack of accessibility that RAM and SSAC offered. Newton goes on to say that the Panthers spent their time getting to know people in their community (Newton, 1973). Through familiarizing

themselves with their community, the Panthers were able to probe what problems their neighborhood endured but were also able to spread their objective for the BPP. Furthermore, The Panthers began utilizing their program and were "Interested primarily in educating and revolutionizing the community" and that they "needed to get their attention and give them something to identify with" (Newton, 1973, p. 127). Therefore, the ten-point program was meant to address the needs of Black individuals across a wide spectrum, while simultaneously making the African American community aware of the racial disparities prevalent in their neighborhood, in response, unifying individuals to create positive change.

The BPP didn't just take initiative by creating the Panthers because of what SSAC and RAM lacked, but gained inspiration from influential leaders, which is what guided the beliefs and actions of the party. In Abu-Jamal's memoir, where he highlights his memories as one of the founding members of the Philadelphia branch, he notes that the BPP was a "Malcomist" party

(Abu-Jamal, 2004). Indicating that the BPP was heavily inspired by the revolutionary Malcolm X. In Seale's autobiography, he mentions that Eldridge Cleaver, the Minister of Information told Seale, "Malcolm X had an impact on everybody like that" (Seale, 1970, p. 3).

Furthermore, Seale professes that the Panthers must arm themselves against groups like "Birtchite" and "Ku Klux Klanners" that are within the police institution (Seale, 1970, p. 65).

The party's decision to arm themselves aligns with Malcolm X's belief that it is crucial for African Americans to arm themselves to protect oneself from powerful systems, like police institutions. Additionally, Newton states that "Malcolm's spirit is in us" (Newton, 1973, p. 118). Signifying that all Black individuals want freedom from not just physical violence from police officers, but systemic racism that impacts housing, education, and access to healthcare, hence the resistance and strive for liberty is how Malcolm's spirit lives in African Americans.

Meanwhile, Seale notes that he read *Wretched of the Earth* six times (Seale, 1970). Thereby, Seale's repetition of reading Fanon's work illustrates that the Panthers wanted to grasp the ideas that Fanon presents to tailor it to the party. In *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon brings up the lumpenproletariat (Fanon, 2021). While Karl Marx coined the term, Fanon uses lumpenproletariat to describe poor and marginalized communities that are often overlooked in society and emphasizes that these groups of people are needed to start a proper revolution. In the case of the Panthers, the lumpenproletariat would be the Black community in Oakland and other branches. Essentially, the Panthers grasped that to create equality for African Americans, they would have to include demographics that are overlooked in white society, like poor individuals,

Black individuals, and individuals who are labeled as criminals. That's why the Panthers highlight that "The party always functioned on need. What do the people need? That was the consistent question. How can we serve the people?" (Huggins, 2010, p. 84). The Panthers are helping the lumpenproletariat of their community by giving them the assistance and support in these communities toward beginning a revolution for proper change.

In a 2007 interview Ericka Huggins, Director of the Oakland Community school addresses the misconception that the BPP was a nationalist group by clarifying that the Panthers were a socialist organization that intertwined with Marxism-Leninism (Huggins, 2010). Which indicates that unlike Black nationalists, the BPP did not oppose solidarity from individuals who were not Black to elevate in society. Additionally, because the group focused on socialism and Marxist-Leninism, the Panthers believed that capitalism harmed the Black community and aimed to eliminate racial disparities by asserting that the Black community needs to have more power in deciding how the resources given to the community are distributed.

One of the many ways the Panthers were able to help their community was through creating survival programs which also allowed them to implement their ten-point program. Stephen James, a photographer for the Panthers notes that, in total, the Panthers established more than 60 programs (Seale & Shames, 2016). The programs consisted of liberation schools, giving away free food, shoes, rides to hospitals, and more for their community. In essence, these programs prevented individuals from giving money to businesses that furthered their impoverishment. In addition, Newton says that the survival programs were meant to aid people until they became aware of how systemic racism affects them to create an improved America (Newton, 1973). Meaning that, the survival programs, just like the ten-point program were meant to bring awareness to the racial disparities Black individuals experience. But Newton's assertion suggests that survival programs were meant to be temporary until the individuals in the community were able to raise their

consciousness and recognize how the government perpetuates their racial disparities. In turn, allowing African Americans to revolutionize together. This objective of their survival programs corresponds to Fanon's idea that to start a revolution you need the support of the lumpenproletariat. Equally important, Newton goes on to say, "During a flood the raft is a life-saving device, but is only a means of getting to a higher ground. So, too, with survival programs, which are emergency services. In themselves they do not change social conditions, but they are life-saving vehicles until conditions change" (Newton, 1972). Which confirms the idea that survival programs were meant to be for a short time until the people in the community came together to address systemic racism while pushing for powerful individuals within the government to develop a concrete change for the Black community.

History and the rise of liberation schools

In his autobiography, Newton discusses his trip to San Francisco State and observes that after his talk with students on campus he "felt even more strongly that the Party would have to develop a program to implement Point 5 of our program, a true education for our people" (Newton, 1973, p. 183). Through Newton's interaction with the students, he recognized that many could not analytically think for themselves, but rather, recite indoctrinated information they learned in school. Thereby, Newton's recognition of what Woodson called the "mis educated" students is what pushed him to initiate liberation schools. Huggins notes that the first liberation school was the Children's House, and then the title was changed to the Intercommunal Youth Institute (IYI) in 1971 (Huggins, 2010). It is essential to point out that the Children's House was structured as daycare, then when changed to IYI, began functioning as a structured school. The objectives of the schools were the same despite the name changes. Furthermore, Huggins emphasizes that "These community school programs created a forum for young people to explore a factual history of America" (Seale & Shames, 2016, p. 93). Confirming that IYI prioritized providing children with holistic education rather than only

providing information they deemed would be beneficial for the children, which differs from traditional school systems. It is important to note that IYI consisted of children ranging from 2-12 within the community (Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation 2008). Which highlights that the Panthers saw no age limit on a child's ability to learn new information.

The IYI was later titled the Oakland Community School (OCS) in 1974, and consisted of children around the neighborhood (Huggins, 2010). It is crucial to keep in mind that despite the name change to OCS, the function of the liberation schools remained the same. When interviewed by a child attending OCS, Newton reveals that their liberation schools don't have grades, but rather levels (Life Live Inspire Flight Educate, 2015). The OCS prioritizing levels

instead of grades. This ensures that every child is able to demonstrate certain abilities before advancing instead of traditional school systems that allow children who are unable to demonstrate certain skills to transition to a higher grade. For instance, Newton recalls during his high school experience being illiterate but still obtaining his diploma (Life Live Inspire Flight Educate, 2015). In other words, the liberation schools wanted to ensure that students obtained intangible and tangible skills before moving them to different levels. Moreover, Newton emphasizes the importance of students asking the teachers questions because the students may provide a new perspective to the information presented to their peers and teachers (Life Live Inspire Flight Educate, 2015).

Ultimately, the OCS is not centered around giving children information that they are guided to believe, but rather, the youth are able to question what is presented to them, which provides healthy productive conversation and critical thinking. Newton goes on to say that people are used to "accepting the old answers" but that is what the school is trying to push away from (Life Live Inspire Flight Educate, 2015, 11:36). In essence, traditional schools are a breeding ground for misinformation due to white supremacy that elevates American history that belittles African

Americans. Through the Panthers recognizing the flaw in America's curriculum they encourage students to challenge and ask questions about their subjects. Furthermore, Hillard states that the students "may openly criticize the entire program of our school, using as their guide the basic principles of living and working together" (Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation, 2008). Which confirms that every student's curiosity is satisfied within their school models. Newton continues by saying, "No one knows the whole answer, we only have part of it and if we pretend we have the whole, we're not telling the truth" (Life Live Inspire Flight Educate, 2015, 11:27).

Suggesting that OCS educators openly admit to not having the answers to everything, but rather than being like American school systems that present the information in their textbooks as concrete, the Panthers utilized the children's questions to open room for a broader discussion. Moreover, Huggins notes that "It was just entirely unique and I would like to see it happen again because it was a model that could be replicated anywhere, anytime, by anybody. It wasn't that you had to be black or you had to be connected with an organization" (Huggins, 2010, p. 82). Huggins's comment confirms that modern educators can implement the OCS's model into their own curriculum no matter what race you identify with.

The OCS's curriculum consisted of math, language arts, science, people's art, political education, and environmental studies (Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation, 2008). Hillard describes people's art as "the history of art and painting" and "its relationship to Black and poor people" (Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation, 2008, p. 8). Hillard's description of people's art illustrates that OCS went beyond just giving representation of Black individuals through slavery, which the traditional education system already struggles with, but also provided Black history beyond brutality.

As for political education, Hillard notes that the point of teaching the course was to develop the children's awareness of the world that they're in by discussing different types of people in

society and their beliefs while also pinpointing Black and Mexican American history. (Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation, 2008). OCS's inclusion of Black and Mexican American history demonstrates how these marginalized identities cannot be separated from American history. Hillard goes on to say, "Black and poor youth in this country have been offered a blurred vision of the future through unenlightened and racist educational institutions" and the purpose was "To provide the young with the ability and technical training that will make it possible for them to evaluate their heritage for themselves" (Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation, 2008, p. 7).

Meaning that through political education classes, students can grasp how the world around them works, and the value their people have within it. Moreover, Hillard asserts that, "With a program like this, the instructors cannot adhere to rigid or traditional teaching techniques" (Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation, 2008, p. 9). Indicating that the Panthers were aware that if their liberation schools followed the same model as traditional school systems, which are dictated by white supremacy, then the program wouldn't have a positive impact on the youth.

Huggins declares that guest speakers at their schools included James Baldwin, Rosa Parks, and Cesar Chavez (Huggins, 2010). The Panthers' inclusion of powerful leaders visiting their schools adheres to positive visual culture. Meaning that although the Panthers recognized the importance of teaching students about systemic racism, they also were able to expose children to role models that exhibit resistance to oppression, providing them hope for the future. In other words, the Panthers fought against "carceral" structured school systems that Love says kills Black dreams.

Intentions/Goals of the liberation schools

Overall, the Panthers wanted to raise their communities' consciousness for them to be able to critically assess their placement in society for themselves. As mentioned earlier, Newton emphasized the Panthers' goal of showing their neighborhood that there are other forms of

violence that don't just relate to physical brutality that harm poor and marginalized communities. Newton pointing out other forms of violence illustrates the objective of the survival programs and patrolling Panthers was to enlighten their community. Additionally, In Huggins's interview, she argues that the government pushes people to think in certain ways that continually harms the Black community and how the Panthers are trying to deconstruct the indoctrinated thinking (Huggins, 2010). Huggins continues by stating that Black people have

been used to being slaves for so long that they no longer need to be threatened because they have been conditioned to stay in line (Huggins, 2010). Suggesting that there have been centuries of indoctrination that the Panthers were trying to dismantle, indicating that for the Black community to progress, they must separate from anti-black ideologies instilled in them from white supremacist institutions like school systems.

When discussing the objective of their liberation schools, Huggins notes that "Our model was to teach children how to think, not what to think" (Huggins, 2010, p. 85). Meaning that, the students were taught how to analyze work and come to their own conclusions. Hillard mentions that students were taught how to "develop creative solutions to deal with them" (Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation, 2008, p. 5). Essentially, when students are taught how to analyze problems, they can use those skills to interpret the problems that happen in their neighborhood or in their home. With being able to interpret problems, students are then able to think through solutions that can alleviate their issues.

Huggins elaborates and shares that the atmosphere was beautiful, in that "the school culture created itself through our intention to love the children, to teach them how to think, and to have them become global citizens" (Huggins, 2010, p. 85). Therefore, the curriculum wasn't just shaped around giving them information but ensured that the children were given skills like analytical thinking and awareness of other cultures to help them navigate the real world.

Additionally, Hillard emphasizes that the IYI was a “direct response to the public schools, producing people incapable to think for themselves” (Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation, 2008, p. 5). Which connects to Newton’s experience with observing students at San Francisco State, but it also illustrates that the Panthers did not want children to just recite information that is presented to them but rather be able to think analytically before accepting information given to them.

Hillard goes on to say that the Panthers wanted to provide basic skills and ways of thinking while also creating room for the youth to interact with one another (Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation, 2008). For instance, in Seale’s autobiography he affirms that when he was sixteen years old, he was antagonistic to society because of the injustices happening around him, but he didn’t know how to explain them (Seale, 1970). Seale being unable to articulate his feelings to the injustices that he observed illustrates how traditional school systems do not provide children, especially marginalized youth, the foundation to articulate the severity of the discrimination many experience daily. Meanwhile, Shames notes that within the Oakland Community School, “Their charter school was cited as excellent by the California State Legislature and became a model in poor communities” (Shames & Seale, 2016, p. 13). In essence, Shames’s statement emphasizes that their liberation schools had a lasting impact on Black youth. Huggins goes on to affirm that “we did create an educational environment that mitigates the impacts of slavery” (Huggins, 2010, p. 56). Mitigating the impacts of slavery means that Huggins and other Panther members involved in the liberation schools resisted against centuries of dehumanization, bad education, and the erasure of Black history African Americans endured.

In general, the Panthers’ mission was to build a community for Black people that valued their humanity. Abu-Jamal notes that the old Panthers always dedicated time to teaching the young ones “anything his ever-hungry curiosity could dream about” (Abu-Jamal, 2004, p. 161). Abu

Jamal's statement attests that the BPP created a space for individuals to rely on one another. Meanwhile Huggins mentions a memory of Bunchy, a member from the Southern California chapter, stating that he always discussed that they need to love each other, and that made her respect the need to create a community (Huggins, 2010). It is important to note that when Bunchy made this comment, it was one of the first times Huggins met Bunchy. Their first encounter and Bunchy highlighting the need for community displays how much oppression Black individuals faced, and through that, recognized the importance of coming together. Moreover, Newton discusses that within white supremacy, they had a good reason to try to erase black history because when Black people see their ancestors that resisted against oppression that will cause the community to band together and revolutionize (Newton, 1973). Which is to say that white supremacy erases Black culture to hide what true resistance and resilience looks like within Black spaces in order to keep African Americans compliant while institutions harm them. However, the Panthers disrupted compliance through unifying their Oakland community. Activist Tom Hayden notes that "The Panthers at their best transformed the lives of thousands of African Americans, from "brothers on the block: to unjustly imprisoned to the early founders of black studies" (Shames & Seale, 2016, p. 210). Therefore, through the Panthers unifying the overlooked identities in their neighborhood, they were able to build a foundation of resistance to systemic racism.

As for their liberation schools, Huggins describes that "it was like a family" (Huggins, 2010, p. 82). Huggins continues by noting that a bond was created between the faculty, teachers, and students through OCS (Huggins, 2010). Their liberation schools focused on building relationships with their students. Additionally, Huggins mentions that she had an open-door policy, and they could talk to her about anything (Huggins, 2010). Her open-door policy builds the idea that to build a community, you must show that you value students as a whole being. Allowing students to talk about anything is to recognize and value that these students have a life outside of

school that they also must navigate. She goes on to say that “It was the most phenomenal teaching experience I’ve ever had and to be able to facilitate parents from poor communities especially communities of color without blame, shame, or judgement was a wonderful experience also” (Huggins, 2010, p. 82). Huggins’s statement depicts the importance of giving marginalized communities a space to be valued, especially because poor and communities of color are devalued in the education system, illustrating the importance of schools being a “no judge” zone. Furthermore, Huggins describes a story of a student who told a friend that he was “raised to believe that if somebody is in my community, then I am going to support them and they will support me. That’s how I was raised” (Huggins, 2010, p. 89). This illustrates that students were able to transfer their value of community to people outside of school too. Huggins declares that the staff helped the youth understand themselves and that the students can do anything they put their minds to (Huggins, 2010). Their model of unity aided students in becoming capable human beings in society. Huggins finishes by stating that the teachers, administrators, and students who aimed to motivate youth “challenged existing public education concepts for black and other poor and racially marginalized communities during the 1970s and 1980s” (Huggins, 2010, p. 93). In other words, through the OCS providing an inclusive educational community they were able to challenge white supremacist ideas of what Black youth are able of.

Overall, findings from scholars such as Woodson, and Love point to a long history of discrimination and lack of representation in the classroom, which exacerbates racism. As a result, Black youth experience the physical and psychological consequences of white supremacy being embedded within schooling institutions. In response to the racism and the psychological and physiological consequences of it, the Panthers created their liberation schools. While previous discussion of the literature highlights the development of their liberation schools, what follows is an in-depth discussion around the actual curriculum, based on information in primary documents from the Black Panther Party Schools. An archival analysis of schooling documents is needed to

Investigate and understand how the Panthers ingrained their philosophies in their curriculum to make their liberation schools distinct.

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