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Book Excerpt: Women of the Black Panther Party Activity and Coloring Book

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Book Excerpt

Women of the Black Panther Party Activity and Coloring Book

By Jilchristina Vest and James Shields

Graphics by James Shields

Graphics inspired by Stephen Shames Photography

2020, 40 pages

\$18.00 (paperback)



Introduction to the Book

By **Angela D. LeBlanc-Ernest*** and **Ericka C. Huggins****

Hello Children, big and small! Welcome to the [*Women of the Black Panther Party Activity and Coloring Book*](#). It is our pleasure to introduce you to this activity book both as co-contributors to the *#SayHerName Women of the Black Panther Party Mural* as well as collaborators united in our passion for education, children and preserving the history of the Black Panther Party and its Survival Programs.

Members of the Black Panther Party (BPP) were young, ambitious, and filled with love for all people, committed to change locally and internationally. The fight for human rights was the goal. The members of the BPP fought for that right from the 1960s to the 1980s. When Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale imagined and created the organization in Oakland, California, on October 17, 1966, they started a movement that lit imaginations and changed the lives of thousands of future members and supporters of freedom around the world. They sat together in Oakland and wrote the Black Panther Party 10-Point Platform and Program. It was a call

* **Angela D. LeBlanc-Ernest** focuses on the Modern Black Freedom Struggle. She is a graduate of Harvard University with a BA in Afro-American Studies and Stanford University with an MA in American History. The founding director of the Black Panther Party Research Project at Stanford, her work on the history of the Black Panther Party (BPP) includes the history of women, the impact of gender in the Party and the organization's community Survival Programs. Currently, Angela is the director of The OCS Project LLC, and she is directing and producing a documentary about the BPP's Oakland Community School, one of their longest-lasting Survival Programs. She also is a co-founder of the Intersectional Black Panther Party History Project (IPHP).

** **Ericka Huggins** is an activist, former political prisoner and leader in the Black Panther Party, educator and student. Ericka Huggins has devoted her life to the equitable treatment of all human beings—beyond the boundaries of race, age, culture, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability and status associated with citizenship. For the past 37 years she has lectured across the country and internationally on issues relating to the well-being of women, children & youth; restorative justice as the antidote to punitive justice; whole being education, and the role of spiritual practice in sustaining activism and promoting social change.

for basic human rights. Point 10 of the Platform is a summary of them all: *"We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace."*

Women of the Black Panther Party quickly became a main foundation for improving human lives in the U.S. Like many freedom movements throughout history, women were the backbone of the BPP. Tarika Lewis, a sixteen-year-old high school student, asked to join and became the first woman member of the BPP. Many young Black women like Tarika, an artist and violinist, filled the roles of boots on the ground community organizers, Central Committee leaders, Survival Program administrators, BPP Newspaper writers, artists and editors, community board members, teachers, mothers and grandmothers. They were coalition-builders who learned from the people on the job.

Women of the Black Panther Party were harassed and attacked by federal and local law enforcement in the same way as the men of the BPP. Whether they worked in the Bay Area, Philadelphia, Boston, New Orleans, Atlanta, Winston-Salem, Houston, or abroad in Algeria or Tanzania, they sacrificed their lives to challenge the old ways that served a few, to work toward implementing the Ten Point Program, to serve many.

Of course, the BPP made mistakes along the way, as young organizers with an average age of 19; they tried to fashion a new world that blended ways of thinking and create solutions to worldwide problems using the teachings from a variety of international revolutionary women and men of that time. These thinkers and doers helped party members to face the reality that most men and some women, were raised or trained to believe that boys and men are smarter and stronger than women and girls. Just as millions are taught that the lives of people of color, Black, Brown and Indigenous (Native) people are less valuable than the lives of White¹ people.

¹ Editorial note: in adherence with the style guide of the American Psychological Association, the IJHRE capitalizes all racial groups for articles, including Black, White and Indigenous. There has been general consensus for the capitalization of the "B" in "Black" with more debates around the term "White" versus "white." As scholar Eve L. Ewing writes (see [here](#)): "Language and racial categories have some important things in common: They are fluid, they are inherently political, and they are a socially constructed set of shared norms that are constantly in flux as our beliefs and circumstances change." We understand that language and conventions may change, and have decided at this moment in time, to capitalize all racial groups referenced in this special issue.

As well, the ideas that it's best to be rich in money and that if you live in conditions of poverty, it's your fault.

Indeed, women of the BPP challenged themselves and the men to rise to a higher standard, to dig deep inside themselves, and do the work required to rebuild Black and other poor communities. At the center of their struggles, was a love for humanity; a big heart for the people.

This activity book honors the lives of Women of the Black Panther Party, seen and unseen, alive and in the ancestral realm, who dedicated their lives to uplifting the quality of life for Black and poor communities. This book is a companion to the West Oakland Mural Project and the *#SayHerName Women of The Black Panther Party* mural dedicated to women of the BPP. We know that one mural and one little book will never do full justice to the beauty of these women's lives. However, it is a starting point for learning more. These pages contain a concentration of information about some of the women in the Black Panther Party; the most information that has ever been amassed. Yet, we hope that this small tribute will spark greater interest. May it function as a springboard for more research and the collection of more oral histories and materials that archive the lives of women of the BPP. More importantly, we hope that this activity book will inspire young women and men today to make a positive difference in their communities, wherever they live in the world.

Black Panther Party members, women and men alike, did not wait for the right time. They declared that the time for change was/is now.

All Power to all the People!