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“Don’t no woman have to do nothing she don’t want to do”: Gender, Activism, and the Illinois Black Panther Party

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Abstract

The essay is an examination of the gender dynamics in the Illinois Black Panther Party. Scholarship on the Black Panther Party has identified sexism, misogyny, and gender discrimination as critical issues within the organization. This article argues that, although those problems existed, gender dynamics were not uniform across chapters. Rather, each chapter was distinct with regard to region and concerns immediate to distinct localities. For this reason, I assert, it is critical that researchers examine each chapter on its own to determine its respective gender policy and practice. This paper focuses on the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party and finds that it was more progressive and consistent in its gender dynamics than most other Panther affiliates and Civil Rights/black power organizations.

“There is no single BPP,” Mumia Abu Jamal has written. Rather, “there are many, unified in one national organization, to be sure, but separated by the various regional and cultural influences that form and inform consciousness.” Between 1966 and 1982, there were more than forty Black Panther Party (BPP) chapters across America and abroad. These chapters differed from one another, as well as from the national headquarters in Oakland, California, in their methodologies, ideologies, and activities. For example, many New York Panthers were Muslims because of the influence of Malcolm X, but some others identified themselves as Yoruba, Santeria, and Puerto Rican—which differed greatly not only from popular perceptions of the party but also from the exclusively African American founding branch in Oakland. Thus, when analyzing the Black Panther Party, it is important to understand that the “macrocosm cannot truly be found in the microcosm.”¹

This article investigates the ways in which the Illinois Black Panther Party (ILBPP) practiced the party line, as well as the ways that it differed from the national organization in regard to gender dynamics. Many aspects of the Illinois party reflected the ideology, programs, and direction of the Oakland headquarters. Nevertheless, the gender dynamic differences are significant and are identifying markers of the Illinois Panthers. Specifically, this branch demonstrated sincere efforts to incorporate and maintain gender equality among their membership by placing women in meaningful positions of power and responsibility. This commitment to gender equality was not easy. Instead, this local ILBPP branch wrestled unevenly, yet creatively, with gender politics in leadership, sex, and parenting roles.

While there were many women members of the ILBPP, only eight experiences are used in this examination. One challenge of writing history about people who were members of iconic groups such as the BPP and who remain alive is that many prefer to tell their own stories without a researcher intermediate. That is, they may be reluctant to participate in interviews or provide much oral history detail. Thus, to supplement the first-person interviews, primary sources such as lectures/presentations and interviews made available via documentaries are employed along with secondary sources that examine other local BPP chapters. An examination of recent edited works published on the BPP at the local level by scholars such as Judson Jeffries, Peniel Joseph, Yohuru Williams, and Jama Lazerow reveal the limited amount of scholarship that analyzes the Panther's gender dynamics.² This work builds on this and other scholarship.

Black Panther Party for Self-Defense

The Black Panther Party for Self Defense was established in 1966 in Oakland, California, by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, after they received permission from Stokely Carmichael and the Lowndes County Freedom Organization in Alabama to use their title and symbol.³ Like thousands of others, the two men had migrated from the South to escape racism and segregation only to find similar conditions in Oakland that prevented equal opportunity to labor, education, and housing, as well as heightened elements of police brutality, incarceration, and corruption in electoral politics. In their attempt to remedy the plight of working-class and oppressed African Americans in their area, Newton and Seale adopted the Black Panther symbol and title, creating a new self-empowerment organization in the region's burgeoning

environment of radicalism and Black Power ideology.⁴ The Black Panther Party for Self Defense originated, to borrow a phrase from Miriam Ma'at-Ka'ra Monges, "among the black downtrodden."⁵ Black Panthers lived among impoverished African Americans, and the party's offices were in low-income, urban, African American communities. Immersed in such settings, where the ideology of self-defense is commonplace, the party popularized radicalism and armed resistance.

The party's political and social struggle was defiant and highly publicized. The organization began as a small group of young black men who conducted police patrols to eliminate police brutality in African American communities. Scholars Steve Estes and Simon Wendt both point out that much of the party's performance of armed resistance was masculinized. Steve Estes posits that a "masculinist liberation ideology helped the Panthers win recruits and allies, but it also spurred many men in the movement to use violence to prove their manhood."⁶ Simon Wendt echoed this point via his analysis of the relationship between self-defense and manhood during the civil rights movement: "Although black nationalists such as the Black Panther Party (BPP) construed self-defense as a revolutionary alternative to nonviolence that would stop police brutality, it served primarily as a gendered symbol of male psychological empowerment."⁷ Although the Panther's police patrols would later include women members, Estes's and Wendt's analyses demonstrated an aura of hypermasculinity that was a characteristic of patrol participants. The Panthers reasoned that police power exercised against black sections of American cities operated in the same manner as colonial powers did in policing colonized subjects: "By staging confrontations with police," Panther scholar Nikhil Pal Singh noted, "Newton and Seale sought to dramatize how a form of colonial power was actually deployed against black people in the urban areas of the U.S. under the auspices of policing."⁸ Huey Newton and Bobby Seale learned and taught California law to party members with the purpose of protecting their communities and policing the police. Encounters with police catapulted the Panthers into national prominence.

Scholar Chris Booker outlines six key events that "enhanced the organization's prestige, publicized its existence and objectives, and sharpened the hostility of the American establishment against it."⁹ First, the Black Panther Party provided security for Betty Shabazz during her visit to the Bay Area to be interviewed by *Ramparts* magazine. Twenty armed Panthers marched Shabazz into the magazine's office, which horrified the staff and eventually led to an armed confrontation with police outside the building. Shabazz was

escorted to safety by several Panthers, while Newton and other members taunted and intimidated the police, causing the officers to back down. The media coverage of the incident brought widespread attention to the Black Panther Party (Booker, "Lumpenization," 341).

The police murder of Denzil Dowell in Richmond, California, was a second catalyst. George Dowell contacted the party to investigate his brother's murder, and the Panthers concluded that the murder was not an isolated event. The party held two rallies, attended by more than 150 people, to inform residents of the necessity of armed self-defense (Booker, "Lumpenization," 341–42). These events not only helped to increase membership and interest in the group but also demonstrated the community's support of and confidence in the organization.

Next, Eldridge Cleaver, Stokely Carmichael (later known as Kwame Ture), H. Rap Brown, and James Farmer became Panthers. These activities were followed by a short-lived, tumultuous merger between the BPP and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which significantly increased the Party's membership. Further still, the Detroit-based League of Revolutionary Black Workers (LRBW) participated in joint activities with the Panthers. The addition of these young, influential leaders and established organizations "lent the impression of a Panther monopoly on the Black revolutionary leadership of the period . . . [and] cemented the impression that the African American revolutionary left was uniting under the banner of the Black Panther Party" (Booker, "Lumpenization," 342).¹⁰

A fourth spurt in membership followed the sensationalized May 2, 1967, international media coverage of an armed delegation of Black Panther Party lobbyists who stormed the California State Assembly and interrupted the proceedings to protest a bill aimed at preventing Panthers (and other citizens) from carrying loaded, unconcealed weapons in public places.¹¹ Before leaving, Bobby Seale read a "Panther Mandate" to reporters stating that it was the black community's constitutional right to arm itself, as well as a survival necessity. The footage aired on networks throughout the world. This display of boldness and courage on the part of young black men no doubt inspired those of similar identity and instilled fear and anger in those who interpreted the Panthers' defiance as an assault against the established racial hierarchy and social order.

More exposure arose after the October 28, 1967, confrontation between Huey Newton and two police officers that resulted in the shooting death of Officer John Frey and the serious wounding of Newton and Officer Herbert

Heanes. Newton's incarceration following the incident led the Black Panther Party to ally with the white leftist Peace and Freedom Party, and together they held domestic and international "Free Huey" rallies that resulted in another increase in membership. The "Free Huey" campaign helped the party to become a national organization (Booker, "Lumpenization," 343).

Finally, a shoot-out between Panthers and police two days after Martin Luther King's assassination resulted in the first highly publicized Panther death and served as the sixth incident to cause a surge in party membership and exposure. On April 6, 1968, Eldridge Cleaver, who was determined to register an armed response to the assassination of King, led a small convoy of party members on a mission to ambush a police patrol car. While searching for a police car, Cleaver left one of the Panther cars to urinate in some bushes. A police squad car spotted Cleaver and a gun battle ensued. Cleaver and seventeen-year-old Bobby Hutton took cover in the basement of a nearby home and returned fire against the police until they ran out of ammunition. After being forced to surrender, Bobby Hutton was unarmed when he was shot and killed by police. Publicity of his murder helped to increase the Panthers' prestige and national support (Booker, "Lumpenization," 344).

The party's public image was also crucial to increases in membership at the same time that it brought the organization publicity and drew governmental hostility. Jane Rhodes documented how young African American men and women wearing black leather jackets, black berets, and blue shirts, carrying rifles, marching in an organized fashion, and disparaging the various forms of the American power structure drew many African American youth and Vietnam veterans to the party. Such images were highly masculinized, yet the party frequently advertised that the role of women members was the same as men. While their dress, afro hairstyles, raised black fists, and black power rhetoric portrayed a gendered public image, the party's public persona was also culturally attractive to African American students and other young adults who supported a more radical approach to achieving equality in America. The Panthers' physical and cultural attractiveness, coupled with the media's frequently sensationalized representations of the group, helped to pull African American youth and veterans toward the party.¹²

Although local issues influenced the founding of the ILBPP, it also formed as a result of all the previously mentioned factors. By 1968, the BPP was popular not only as a result of its defiance toward law enforcement but also because its socialist ideology resonated with African American youth. The party's anticapitalist position was demonstrated via its numerous survival

programs. Panther rhetoric advertised that such programs demonstrated the effectiveness of socialism as people in the community in which they served supported the BPP primarily as a result of these programs: “People knew that the BPP was a place where they could make a difference.”¹³ Many African American residents who did not believe in the group’s armed resistance method nevertheless supported the Panthers because of the party’s community service programs. The party echoed a statement once articulated by writer, poet, and activist James Baldwin: “to be black and conscious in America is to be in a constant state of rage.”¹⁴ Panthers believed the statement to be “very true of black people in general in this country” due to racism and the unequal economic distribution of wealth (“In Defense of Self-Defense,” 16). The group’s spokespersons often referred to America as a “fascist nation.” They defined *fascism* as capitalism plus racism practiced by an open dictatorship of finance capitalism. To Panthers, “finance capital” meant not only banks, trusts, and monopolies but also human property (businessmen, demagogues, politicians, and police) whom they identified as terrorists reaping vengeance against the working class.¹⁵ The *Black Panther* newspaper and members’ speaking tours communicated the party’s message and purpose to African American communities and helped the party establish branches in numerous cities.

Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party

Fred Hampton, who at the time was the head of the Maywood, Illinois, NAACP Youth Council, was directly introduced to Panther ideology during a member’s speaking tour in Chicago. Joan Elbert, president of the Lutheran Human Relations Association (LHRA) and Hampton’s neighbor, recalls that Lennie Eggleston, a Panther from the Los Angeles chapter, won Hampton over to the party’s ideology. Shortly after his encounter with Eggleston, Hampton contemplated joining the Black Panther Party, but the group had yet to establish a chapter in Chicago. Unbeknownst to Hampton at the time, young men on both the west and south sides had organized separate unofficial entities of the party. In 1968, Hampton met the South Side faction at a leadership conference organized by former Chicago Freedom Movement leader Phil Cohran at the Afro-Arts Theater on 39th and Drexel. Hampton was one of the presenters, and his speech fired up the crowd of young radicals.¹⁶ Bobby Rush and Bob Brown, former SNCC members who had been heavily involved in the Chicago Freedom Movement, formed a Black Panther

Party chapter and needed a speaker. Hampton, a speaker looking to join the Black Panther Party, was a natural choice.¹⁷

On the West Side, Drew Ferguson and Jewel Cook also formed a Black Panther Party chapter in the East Garfield area made up of former members of Deacons for Defense and Justice, local young adults, and some Vice Lords (a socially conscious street gang). In August 1968, they held a rally at the Senate Theater and met twenty former SNCC-members-turned-Black-Panthers led by Rush and Brown. After the South Side faction was able to gain an official BPP charter, the two groups decided to merge (Rice, “World of the Illinois Panthers,” 51; Rice, “Black Radicalism,” 72; Rush, Reflection). The founding members included Fred Hampton, Bobby Rush, Bob Brown, Bob Clay, Rufus “Chaka” Walls, Jewel Cook, and Henry English, among others. They all agreed to appoint Hampton as the main spokesperson, not only due to his oratorical prowess but because his brain was like a sponge: he was able to read books quickly and disseminate the knowledge gained from the readings.¹⁸ When Hampton left the NAACP to found the ILBPP, several members joined him in the newly established Panther chapter. Joann Lombard stated that she left with Hampton because “he knew about problems facing the community and the world” and Hampton believed the party could be a solution to the issues that plagued poor African American communities.¹⁹

The Illinois chapter was set up to mirror the leadership and organization of its Oakland headquarters. There was no single leader. A Central Committee comprised the leadership of the national organization, and likewise, the Illinois chapter had a Central Staff made up of six (later seven) members. The Central Committee consisted of minister positions, whereas the Illinois chapter’s Central Staff positions were called deputy ministers. There was a deputy minister of information (Rufus Walls), education (Lamar Billy “Che” Brooks), communication (Iris Shin and later Ann Campbell), defense (Bobby Rush), culture (Christina “Chuckles” May), labor (Dianne Dunn and later Yvonne King), and finance (Drew Ferguson); and there was a chairman (Fred Hampton) who served as the group’s spokesperson.²⁰ The chapter also had at least three field lieutenants—Jewel Cook, Bob Lee, and Joan Gray—whose main responsibility was grassroots organizing. Each member was assigned to a cadre headed by a deputy minister. The deputy ministers’ responsibilities included overseeing their cadre and assuring that comrades under their command carried out their assigned daily duties (McCarthy interview; Rice, “Black Radicalism,” 75–76).

It is important to note that the Illinois chapter was successful not only

due to the dynamic leadership of Fred Hampton but also because of the perseverance and dedication of the rank and file. These nonofficer members were continuously on call, doing what needed to be done, and became leaders in their own right. This was the real threat of the Black Panther Party: the party was not just an organization but a structured group of young leaders. Like Fred Hampton, many of the members of the Illinois chapter were former members and leaders of civic, community, student, and national organizations prior to joining the party.

The Panthers believed in reaching out to the *lumpen proletariat*—America's underclass society, which included common criminals and gang members whose actions demonstrated their rejection or break with America's political and economic structures and expectations. The Illinois chapter wanted to organize gangs and end black-on-black violence and thus attempted to form an alliance with the larger black gangs.²¹ A conservative estimate of the Chicago branch membership at the time of its founding in the late fall of 1968 was about fifty members.²² Despite this outreach emphasis, however, most of the Panther recruits came from neighboring colleges and universities, not from gangs—in large part, as a result of their strong recruitment drives targeting Illinois students. Hampton was a student at Crane Community College, which had a highly politically active student population. Bobby Rush was associated with the University of Illinois Chicago Circle campus (UIC). Many of the ILBPP's initial members came from UIC and other city colleges, as well as from the streets of Chicago (King, "Presentation"). In large part, this was a result of the Panthers' strong recruitment drive at colleges and universities throughout Illinois as many members had been involved in the black student movement.

Most of the Illinois Black Panther Party's members were male and female high-school or college students or were affiliated with grassroots community and national political organizations. Many Illinois Panthers were also activists before they joined the party, which contradicts popular perceptions of the group as made up of thugs and criminals. While the *lumpen proletariat* were present at least in the Illinois chapter, this element was minimal in numbers when compared to most Panthers' backgrounds. Thus, Chicago youth who became members decided to continue the work they were already involved in via an organization they believed to be the vanguard of the overall social justice movement. The irony is that popular perceptions of the party as a violent and confrontational entity drew the youth to the organization, even though these characteristics were generalized misrepresentations of the armed self-defense movement.

Gender Dynamics and the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party

When the Black Panther Party formed in 1966, women's liberation was considered an aberration by many "progressive" organizations. For African American women, the "double jeopardy" of racial and gender oppression was a problem that the black struggle for civil rights and self-determination did not necessarily address. Like most American men in the era, many male members of the BPP expressed patriarchal views of gender roles, especially during the organization's formative years (1966–69).

In his research on women Panthers, Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar, argued that the experiences of female members of the Oakland chapter—who were at times subjected to sexism and subordination—"were not the norm for the country." Ogbar's interview of ILBPP member Akua Njeri (formerly Deborah Johnson), the significant other of slain leader Fred Hampton, indicated that she "did not feel marginalized as a Panther woman in Chicago." She stated that "[m]en did not try to take advantage of sisters in our chapter. We had respect. Men and women both cleaned and cooked for the children. We also trained together. We were all Panthers."²³ Furthermore, Charles Jones asserted that another local chapter, the People's Party II in Houston, Texas, was also committed "to the revolutionary principle of gender equality."²⁴

Although Paul Alkebulan's work on women and the Black Panther Party is more recent, Tracye Matthews provided perhaps the most balanced and nuanced analysis of gender dynamics and the Black Panther Party.²⁵ Matthews argued that the gender ideology of the party, both as it was formally stated and as it was exemplified by organizational practices, was played out in most aspects of party activities and affected its ability to function as an effective political organization.²⁶ She contended that "Black women were critical players in the BPP," but she also argued that women were not defined by Panther leadership as active and productive participants in the black liberation struggle. Instead, men were deemed the primary actors and agents of change. Matthews focused on the most controversial leaders within the BPP's national headquarters. She noted that Huey Newton's and Eldridge Cleaver's historical analyses of black women located black females as coconspirators in the castration process and as distant observers, waiting for black men to become courageous enough to liberate them and their children. These men's perspectives asserted that black men were not real men unless they enforced patriarchy and male dominance in sexual and familial relationships. Matthews noted that both Newton and Cleaver ignored the historical legacy of

black men and women who rejected gender hierarchies (Matthews, “No One Ever Asks,” 280–81). In addition, she documented how the gender politics of both Cleaver and Newton progressively changed over time as the “ideological development of Party members was an ongoing process” (ibid., 293).

Nonetheless, Matthews described the Panther’s official policy regarding gender dynamics as complex. Her findings suggested that the party provided women opportunities for political activism not typically present in other Civil Rights and black power groups (Matthews, “No One Ever Asks,” 280–81). Moreover, she argued that the “Party was in fact a very important place for challenging ideas, not just about women’s roles but also men’s roles . . . in trying to define a new revolutionary black man, a revolutionary black woman.”²⁷ The Black Panther Party provided direction for other Civil Rights and black power organizations on how to make progress toward gender equality. According to Donna Murch, the organization advocated for “new legislation to ban police brutality and discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation in jobs and housing, adoption and child custody, taxation, and inheritance laws” (Murch, *Living for the City*, 211). It was one of few Civil Rights and black power groups that included women as equals, and many women joined the group primarily for this reason. As Robyn Spencer notes, the BPP’s ideas and practices of gender evolved over the course of the group’s early life as female membership increased and such members challenged the Panther’s gendered politics.²⁸ For instance, the Des Moines, Iowa, chapter and the New Haven, Connecticut, chapter were founded, organized, and led by women, with Mary Rem setting up the Des Moines branch and Ericka Huggins establishing the New Haven chapter. These leaders made aggressive attempts to institute and maintain gender equality and neutrality in their respective units and addressed women’s issues in their communities.²⁹

Research and interviews centered on the Illinois chapter echo Matthew’s position and confirm Ogbar’s argument that, in at least some chapters, women’s roles were more complex than a simple reading of Newton and Cleaver would suggest. Some ILBPP members contend that gender diversity was not a divisive issue in the Chicago branch because “women’s liberation was not perceived as a problem in the Illinois Party.”³⁰ The Illinois chapter gave women a prominent place as leaders—a place they did not have in Oakland. Women occupied a number of Central Staff positions, headed up committees and programs, and held other positions of responsibility.³¹ “It was a place where women rose to leadership,” contended Joan Gray. “We learned how to lead organizations, how to build institutions, how to take charge, how to negotiate. . . . [W]e learned those skills there in the Party along with the men”

(Gray, panelist, “Women and the Black Panther Party”). Within the first year after the group’s inception, there was a woman section leader, a field secretary, and a woman on the security staff. Wanda Ross was in charge of organizing and securing funds and resources for the free breakfast program. Barbara Sankey was the director of three free breakfast program facilities. Ann Campbell held a seat on the Central Staff as communications secretary. Yvonne King was a member of the Central Staff as deputy minister of labor, and she was also a field secretary, one of the most important positions in the party, due to her talent as a community organizer.³² The ILBPP had jurisdiction over other chapters in the Midwest. Field secretaries were sent out to some of the Illinois state branches and were often given directives from national headquarters to address an issue in another chapter in the Midwest. Several women, among them Joan Gray, who was respected as an intellectual and advent community organizer, filled these assignments (King, “Presentation”).

Yvonne King noted that women worked on the free busing to prisons program and held leadership positions similar to their male comrades. She explained that all members in the Illinois chapter seriously enforced the party’s position that women’s roles in the organization were the same as men’s roles:

We were fortunate that many of the brothers who were in leadership in the central staff, particularly Fred, . . . really encouraged the sisters. Michael [McCarty] mentioned . . . how Fred could make you believe you could walk through a wall and get to the other side. That’s how he made us feel, and it helped us to develop not only as women, but as people within the chapter, but he particularly encouraged women to speak, to represent, to take on responsibility, and we were held accountable.³³

Ahmad Rahmad, once a member of the Illinois chapter, mentioned that it was where he “first took orders from a woman who wasn’t [his] mother” (Rice, “Black Radicalism,” 101).

The Black Panther Party’s ten-point platform and survival programs “outlined the Party’s plan to make sweeping changes in police brutality, housing, employment, education, and other institutions that had a negative impact on the black community. While the government and media focused their public attention on the Party’s initial insistence on the right to bear arms, Party members focused their attention on the ten-point platform and program, and much of that responsibility was taken on by women.”³⁴ Moreover, Donna Murch notes that, by 1969, “women made up the majority of

the rank and file, and their influence was clearly visible in the Party's survival and political education efforts" (Murch, *Living for the City*, 190).

In an interview by Phyllis J. Jackson, Lynn French, one of the Illinois chapter's more prominent members, emphasizes the extent to which women took on substantive roles in the Illinois chapter: "There are an awful lot of women who are unsung heroes in the Party, and although the mental image that many people have is of a defiant young black male with a leather jacket and a beret and his fist raised, they should remember that there were a whole lot of sisters out there struggling too. And committing heroic acts every day" (*Comrade Sisters*, 5:54–6:13). Many of the women who joined the party brought organizing and educational experience to the group because many came from "middle-class families or had attended college" prior to joining the Panthers: "In fact, an internal skills survey conducted in 1973 revealed higher rates of college attendance among female Party members in comparison to their male counterparts" (Murch, *Living for the City*, 266n33).³⁵ Much of the Illinois chapter's success and sustainability was due to the work and leadership of its female members (McCarty interview).

Joan Kelley-Williams served in the Los Angeles, Berkeley, and Oakland chapters for ten years. She joined the party because it was the only group at the time that made a real attempt to address gender equality, as she described in an interview with Phyllis J. Jackson:

Probably for me the thing that differentiated the Black Panther Party from any other organization was . . . that women were seen as equals when I first got involved with the Party. There were other organizations, black organizations at the time that for the most part had women walking two steps behind, whether it was in African garb or in traditional garb, it didn't matter. Women really weren't even remotely considered to be peers or policy makers in the organization and that just did not appeal to me, because tomboy at heart that I was, that and thinking I was as smart as any other man, was not going to make any organization appeal to me. (*Comrade Sisters*, 7:45–8:44)

Yvonne King also asserted that the BPP was revolutionary because it was one of the few male-dominated organization that addressed women's issues:

This was the 1960s and 1970s, and even in progressive organizations women were . . . [relegated] to stereotypical roles. . . . And here was [the Black Panther Party] that not only provided the opportunity [for women as leaders] . . . but it was a policy . . . [that] men and women were treated the same and I believed it and asserted myself as such. And many of the women did and we challenged the sexism, maybe not overtly, but through our belief in the

Party's policy and its principle. . . . Part of the Party's legacy has to be that it provided that opportunity and women took that opportunity and it showed through our commitment, hard work, and our love for the Party and the people. . . . And we held up the men because they believed in the goals.³⁶

Many male Chicago Panthers made a conscious effort to prevent and eradicate sexism and all forms of gender inequality within the organization. Some women members believed that the Chicago chapter did better than other branches at trying to address the gender issue.³⁷ More important, like some women in other chapters, female ILBPP members did not allow their male comrades to disrespect women or practice gender discrimination. Lynn French, for example, claimed that she was not required to be subordinate to men in the Illinois chapter, nor was there any sexual harassment. "Not in Chicago," she said. "We [women] would not accept it" (Rice, "Black Radicalism," 100–101).³⁸

As Matthews has documented, despite the organization's efforts to equal the gender playing field, there is evidence that the BPP was inconsistent in its gender dynamics. For instance, the party posted ads in the *Black Panther* to acquire assistance with the publication. One advertisement located at the bottom of a page reads, "Jive Sisters—Don't read this. . . . The Black Panthers need typists!"³⁹ The ad suggests the presence of gender conflicts over women's roles in the party. Furthermore, Brenda Harris recounts how male members of the Illinois chapter's rank and file often made comments to fellow female members that were offensive. She recalled that some female members were called "prostitutes," comments were made about "their big booties," she was once called a "banana face bitch," and some women faced the danger of being "sexually exploited if she didn't have the wherewithal to stand up for herself." Harris continued, "[I]f you were a woman . . . it depended upon your position in the Party how you were treated." She explained that women in leadership positions or "women who were in relationships with the [male] leadership" were not subjected to such treatment (Harris interview). Joan Gray echoed this point. Referring to sexism she stated that, "[i]f you were the type of woman that stood for and allowed a certain type of behavior to take place then that would happen to you. . . . And in some situations . . . when the leadership was not always there, there would be brothers who would victimize [female members] . . . but this [kind of behavior by male members] was not the rule[:] it was the exception" (Gray, panelist, "Women and the Black Panther Party").

Moreover, Harris contended, the Illinois chapter's leadership "was very

enlightened” and made attempts to prevent such occurrences, to punish those who mistreated their comrades, and even to challenge the sexism of the national leadership. On one visit by a BPP minister from national headquarters who spent the night with the Chicago group, Harris remembers, “[H]e was looking for some [female members]” to have sex with him. The Illinois leadership made it clear to him that “we didn’t have to go with him” and that the minister would respect the women in the Illinois chapter. Harris recalls, “[S]ince we lived in a sexist society individuals were sexist,” and while the Illinois chapter “was not perfect,” it advocated a gender policy that was “anti-sexist and progressive” (Harris interview).

Even Fred Hampton, who demanded that female members be regarded as equals by their male comrades, struggled to be consistent in his attitude toward gender. Hampton stated that washing dishes and sweeping floors was “women’s work,” although men should learn to do this kind of work to prepare them in the event they had to take on these jobs someday. On the other hand, Hampton also stated that women played an important part in the Panther movement, in that they were required to do “the same things” that male members did.⁴⁰

In the face of inquiries about the presence of sexism and negative gender politics in the organization, members of the Illinois Panthers insisted emphatically that the problem was minimal in the Illinois chapter. Yvonne King stated that sexism was present, but, as far as she was concerned, it was not a real problem: “Male chauvinism was an issue . . . but it . . . didn’t have center stage. We recognized male chauvinism, but our primary concern, particularly in the Illinois chapter, was the chain of command. It wasn’t so much who was giving the order, but whether or not that person had the authority to give the order.”⁴¹ Henry Gaddis insisted that women, including King, were treated equally: “Let me say that women of the Party served, and there was no gender distinction as far as [King’s] role on the central staff. She ate, drank, bathed, and very seldomly slept. I mean, she did not work any less than Fred or any other functioning member, and as far as [King’s] role in a leadership position, there was no gender distinction.”⁴²

King related similar sentiments with regard to her male comrades:

As comrades, we lived communally. At least . . . during the time that I was a member of the Party from 1969 through 1974, most of our members lived communally. So you know we worked together, we lived together, we loved together, and we struggled together, we suffered together. You know, some of us were underground together, in prisons together. . . . There were dif-

facilities because of levels of consciousness, because of power relationships, some people abused their positions. But overall the comradeship in the Black Panther Party was very special. A sincere one. (*Comrade Sisters*, 30:36–31:40)

Most Chicago Panthers maintain that sexism was not an issue in their chapter because they made every effort to terminate individuals who refused to adhere to their policy of gender equality. Former Illinois chapter member Joan Gray remembers that Fred Hampton conducted a “big meeting” to address sexism and misogyny in the chapter. “Don’t no woman have to do nothing she don’t want to do,” as Gray recalls an angry rant by Fred Hampton. “[Hampton stated]: You lazy ass punks, you couldn’t get no pussy on your own so you gonna try to force somebody to have sex with you? . . . This is not gonna happen here.” According to Gray, Hampton “wasn’t tolerating any kind of abuse, period, inside of the Party. [H]e was very clear about that and anybody [who violated this policy] was dealt with by Fred, Rush, and the others.”⁴³ Gray recounts how the leadership in the ILBPP responded after an incident regarding the mistreatment of female members by male members. Some male members had acted inappropriately by making sexual advances toward a number of female comrades. “The energy that was prevalent in some [other chapters] I have to say was not the rule [in the Illinois chapter],” recalls Gray.

When Fred [Hampton] and Bobby Rush found out [they commanded those men to line up] . . . and [the women] had sticks and we would go down the line and pop ‘em upside the head or on the butt. But [gender discrimination/sexism] was acknowledged and dealt with. . . . I didn’t blame the Party for [such behavior] or the discrepancies that were happening because movements attract all kinds of people for all kinds or reasons and the thing that has to rise to the top is the mission and vision that the Party had and the work that they were doing. (Gray, panelist, “Women and the Black Panther Party”)

The Illinois chapter not only regulated sexism, but it also investigated the concern in other chapters in the Midwest. Hank Gaddis recalled an episode when he and other field marshals expelled an entire chapter in Milwaukee for violating Panther principles on gender dynamics:

[T]he Milwaukee Chapter had become blatant with renegade ideas, and so we were sent up there to assess the situation and take the appropriate actions. So we went up: Bob [Lee] and I went up to Milwaukee and we got there and we found that the leadership had declined into a group of male chauvinists that had basically put the sisters there into the role of indentured sex slaves and just rampant male chauvinism. Basically the sisters’ duties were to service

the male leadership of the Chapter, and so we purged all those motherfuckers—all the males. We called them in . . . a brother named Walter Chesser and one named Deacon Gentry, and we talked to them and heard what they had to say, and then we told them, “Hey, we’ve been authorized to purge all of ya’ll. You’re purged, and then you’re gonna have to establish yourself to demonstrate that you’re worthy of representing an organization called the Black Panther Party.” And then what we did was, we put the sisters in charge, made them the leadership, and so Milwaukee began to reconstitute itself.⁴⁴

While the Illinois Panthers’ attempt, recalled in the above anecdote, to level the playing field for women and to stamp out sexual harassment and exploitation was laudable, Panthers’ reflections underline a degree of hypermasculinity in the party that those who relayed the account failed to acknowledge as indicative of gender inequality. Female Panthers’ explanations for why they departed the Illinois chapter provided significant evidence in illustration of this point.

Most women who left the Illinois chapter declared that they did not sever ties as a result of sexism or gender discrimination, but rather because of the direction of the organization and its leadership after Hampton’s assassination and to pursue individual goals.⁴⁵ However, some women left the chapter because of the way they were treated as mothers. The party as a national entity represented a real community, as many members both male and female lived communally. Panthers adopted collective parenting and cared for each other’s children as they carried out their everyday required tasks. In Oakland, the unit established the opportunity for “women to be mothers and active political organizers.” Robyn Spencer documented that a memo addressed to the leadership in Oakland, “dated August 16, 1972, brought up the need for a dialogue on planned parenthood within the party, policies for expectant mothers, [and] the creation of an infirmary . . .” to ensure that its female members could be mothers and revolutionaries (Spencer, “Inside the Panther Revolution,” 310). If such a policy had ever been established in the ILBPP, perhaps many of its members would not have left the organization, or perhaps the directive may have also been influenced by female ILBPP members who later relocated to Oakland.

Since such efforts were not created in Chicago, many women in the ILBPP resented the fact that their membership violated their duty as mothers. Joan McCarty recounted that she could not “raise her child and still be a Party member.” She explained that “[the Illinois] chapter did not have daycare” or a “mechanism” in place “like a school like Oakland” for mothers in the party. Moreover, “there was the issue of safety. I [was willing] to put my life

on the line [for the Party] but I [would] not put my child [in harm's way]. . . There was always a chance of a raid" (McCarty interview) Akua Njeri left the ILBPPP in 1971 because "there was no structure set up to work within the Party" and care for her child while being a full-time member:

A lot of things that didn't happen or did happen spoke to the people's inability to deal with being a parent in the context of the revolutionary struggle. A number of people left the Party. . . . It was just really difficult for me to survive with a child without abdicating the responsibility of his growth and development to my mother, and I didn't think it was her full responsibility to take care of him while I continued to do Party work. I did, honestly, . . . continue to try to work for the breakfast program, sell 200 newspapers and so on, but I didn't spend the time that needed to be spent with my son.⁴⁶

Lynn French was one of many Panther women who had to care for her child while she was engaged in her duties for the party. She recalled that her young daughter was just as immersed in the organization as the members themselves:

My daughter's first words weren't "Mama" or "Dada"[:]; it was "Power Peop." She would raise her arm up and go "Power Peop," because we had a free breakfast program in Berkeley where we were living at the Berkeley branch, and she would like to eat with the children. She was just about seven or eight months old and she would get around in the walker and we'd give her scrambled eggs on the tray to the walker and she would try to feed herself. We looked up one morning and she was at the front door as the children were leaving. They would all go "Power to the People," and she was at the front door going "Power Peop," "Power Peop." (*Comrade Sisters*, 39:33–39:58)

Both of these reflections provide evidence of gender discrimination, even though the former members do not necessarily identify this aspect as such. Nurturing and parenting have traditionally been categorized as "women's work" by society at large, and motherhood did not fit with the hypermasculine conceptions of "revolutionary work" that dominated Panther ideology.

In her written account, Kathleen Cleaver recalled that, after Huey Newton's murder charges were dismissed in January 1972, the Black Panther Party had transitioned into a "reformist community action group" from the revolutionary vanguard of the people: "Newton announced that the Panthers had been wrong to attack police, that they would return to church, participate in electoral politics, support black capitalist ventures, and work within the system."⁴⁷ Shortly thereafter, Oakland demanded that all chapters be disbanded and each affiliate's two most highly regarded members be sent

to Oakland to work for the electoral campaigns of Bobby Seale and Elaine Brown. Donna Murch pointed out that one intention of this “large-scale internal reorganization” was to “divert resources and (wo)manpower to the national headquarters in the East Bay” (Murch, *Living for the City*, 192). Lynn French and Yvonne King were two of a number of female Illinois Panthers relocated to Oakland. The move caused several female Panthers to depart from the organization due to what they believed to be the party’s lack of respect for their motherhood. French remembers:

I guess it was late spring of ‘71, late spring, early summer when my daughter was an infant. A call came out from the Central Committee that each chapter was to send two loyal Party members out there for a meeting. . . . And I was told that we would be leaving on a Friday evening and returning by Sunday evening and there was no need to take my daughter, Tanya, with me because there was no point in putting her through all of that. So I left her with some very supportive people who lived in public housing behind our office. And I had been there maybe six hours when June Hilliard informed me that I was a permanent resident of the Bay Area and would not be returning to Chicago. That caught me a little off guard, especially with my child being in Chicago, and it took me probably about six weeks to get her. I got her because Ericka Huggins was going back east to pick up her child and she stopped and as a surprise, she just rang the doorbell one night, and had Tanya in her arms and had brought her back to me. (*Comrade Sisters*, 37:21–38:27).

For French, the separation from her infant daughter as a result of her dedication to the struggle for African American liberation on behalf of the party was too much to bear. She was not alone in this view. She, Akua Njeri, Joan McCarty, and other female Illinois Panthers attributed their defection from the party to the fact that, as party members, their children really did not belong to them.

Despite both male and female members’ conscientious efforts to eliminate gender discrimination, then, the Illinois chapter, like the Black Panther Party as a whole, perpetuated a certain type of discriminatory behavior. This behavior, along with the demands of membership—and the continuous police harassment that caused many Panthers constantly to fear for their lives—drove many women out of the party. Lynn French stated that these concerns are what led to her eventual departure:

I left the Party through a process; it wasn’t just an overnight snap decision. The first link in the chain was way back in 1971 when I was sent to California without my child. And that was something that always stayed in the back of

my mind, that we were under the control of someone who wouldn't take a relationship between a mother and a child seriously. Another major factor in that process was that we had accumulated an amazing amount of support, both financial and community-based in Chicago, and it was tapped continuously. Just greater and greater demands of what we were to send to California, and that got to be too frustrating and too much[;] it was just beyond what I could handle. We also had really been eaten up, I believe, in retrospect, by the fear as a result of Fred being murdered. There was always a paranoia of who you could trust, who you couldn't trust, being followed all the time. When I was pregnant with my child, she was born a month after the due date the doctors had given me, and it had gotten to the point there was an undercover policeman coming up to me on the street saying, "You haven't had that baby yet." It was just a mind game they were playing with us, and the pressure was incredible. My parents gave me a very graceful out, because they had to take a trip and my mother called and asked would I come take care of the kids for a couple of weeks while they went away on business. And I complied, and it made it easier for me to just not come back. (*Comrade Sisters*, 45:26–47:15)

The testimonials provided by female members of the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party demonstrate the nuances of gender dynamics within the organization.

Conclusion

The Illinois Panthers were relatively more consistent than their national counterpart in implementing meaningful gender equality and placing female comrades in positions of power and influence, albeit with the aforementioned limitations. The narratives of ILBPP women, especially those who went from Chicago to Oakland on orders from national headquarters, outline the differences between the two units regarding gender dynamics. Robyn Spencer and Donna Murch provide examples of the influx of women membership and their influence on the evolution of the BPP policy and ideology regarding gender issues. However in Chicago, the experiences of female members demonstrated that men who violated the party's policy on gender equality were swiftly reprimanded. They were also indications of enforcement of party policy: that women were agents of change and that women held key and influential positions in terms of both leadership and the rank and file. Moreover, female ILBPP members sought to negotiate their roles as both

revolutionaries and mothers in direct response to the party's overall gender complexities.

The average age of ILBPP members was between eighteen and twenty-four. Records of actual membership to determine men-to-women ratios are nonexistent for a number of reasons. Police repression destroyed records. In fact, there were three raids conducted by Chicago police and the FBI on the chapter's headquarters in 1969, one of which resulted in the police setting fire to the office. Another factor is that the ILBPP did not publicly market or advertise its membership. In addition, the youth of the ILBPP members may not have been adequately prepared for the stages of the life cycle that included parental responsibilities. After all, the ILBPP women in this study became young mothers while members of the chapter. In other words, there was little anticipation or strategic thinking around child care as part of the revolutionary struggle. Despite these explanations, the Illinois chapter seems to have realized a relatively high level of gender equity. Further, it managed to do so in the contexts of hypermasculine BPP public images and national-level practices and the contemporary gender trends that continued narrowly to define the roles of men and women.

Endnotes

1. Mumia Abu Jamal, "A Life in the Party: An Historical and Retrospective Examination of the Projections and Legacies of the Black Panther Party," in *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and Their Legacy*, edited by Kathleen Cleaver and George N. Katsiaficas (New York: Routledge, 2001), 46–47.

2. Judson Jeffries, ed., *On the Ground: The Black Panther Party in Communities across America* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010); Judson Jeffries, ed., *Comrades: A Local History of the Black Panther Party* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007); Judson Jeffries, ed., *Black Power in the Belly of the Beast* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Peniel Joseph, ed., *Neighborhood Rebels: Black Power at the Local Level* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Jama Lazerow and Yohuru Williams, eds., *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Movement* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Yohuru Williams and Jama Lazerow, eds., *Liberated Territory: Untold Local Perspectives on the Black Panther Party* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

3. Hasan Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 2, 153.

4. Donna Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 4–7.

5. Miriam Ma'at-Ka'ra Monges, "'I Got a Right to the Tree of Life': Afrocentric Reflections

of a Former Community Worker,” in *The Black Panther Party (Reconsidered)*, edited by Charles E. Jones (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998), 137.

6. Steve Estes, *I Am a Man: Race, Manhood, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 155.

7. Simon Wendt, *The Spirit and the Shotgun: New Perspectives on the History of the South* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), 2.

8. Nikhil Pal Singh, “The Black Panthers and the ‘Underdeveloped Country’ of the Left,” in *The Black Panther Party (Reconsidered)*, edited by Charles E. Jones (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998), 78.

9. Chris Booker, “Lumpenization: A Critical Error of the Black Panther Party,” in *The Black Panther Party (Reconsidered)*, ed. Charles E. Jones (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998), 341–43.

10. See also “SNCC, Panthers Announce Merger,” *Guardian*, February 24, 1968, 1.

11. Booker, “Lumpenization,” 343. Bay area legislator Don Mulford introduced a bill to repeal the law that permitted citizens to carry loaded weapons in public places so long as the weapons were openly displayed. The media dubbed the bill the “the Panther Bill,” underlining the bill’s purpose of eliminating Black Panther police patrols and leading to future Panther and police armed confrontations.

12. Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon* (New York: The New Press, 2007).

13. Joan Gray, panelist, “Women and The Black Panther Party,” Dusable Museum of African American History, May 13, 2010, audio file in possession of author.

14. “In Defense of Self Defense: An Exclusive Interview with Minister of Defense, Huey P. Newton,” *Black Panther*, March 16, 1968, 16.

15. *Black Panther Community Newsletter*, June 16, 1969.

16. Jon Rice, “Black Radicalism on Chicago’s West Side: A History of the Illinois Black Panther Party” (Ph.D. diss., Northern Illinois University, 1998), 71. This location would later be known as “the Fort” and would serve as headquarters for the black street gang the Black Stone Rangers.

17. Bobby Rush, Reflection, “A Gathering of Friends: Honoring Reverend Congressman Bobby Lee Rush” (private ceremony), Chicago, Illinois, October 10, 2009. Audio file in possession of author; Jon Rice, “The World of the Illinois Panthers,” in *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles outside the South, 1940–1980*, edited by Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 51; Rice, “Black Radicalism on Chicago’s West Side, 71; Yvonne King, “Presentation on the Illinois Black Panther Party,” Fortieth Reunion of the Black Panther Party, Oakland, California, October 13, 2007, audio and video files in possession of author. King served as a field secretary and organizer for the Rainbow Coalition and later was appointed Deputy Minister of Labor for the Illinois Black Panther Party.

18. Henry English, interview, in *The Essence of Fred Hampton: An Attempt to Capture the Spirit of a Young Man Who Influenced So Many and to Pass It on to Those Who Didn’t Have the Opportunity to Meet Him* ([Chicago]: Salsedo Press, 1989), 50. English is the director of Black United Fund and a former ILBPP member.

19. Joann Lombard, interview, in *The Essence Of Fred Hampton*, 47. Lombard grew up in Maywood with Hampton, and the two attended the same high school. He recruited her into the Youth Branch of the NAACP, and she later joined him as a member of the ILBPP.

20. Michael McCarthy, interview by the author, September 15, 2006, audio file in possession of author; "Report to District 11: Black Panther Party," January 13, 1969, box 229, folder 1, items 46, 46-1, Chicago Police Department-Red Squad, Bureau of Investigative Services, Intelligence Section, Surveillance Unit, Chicago History Museum (hereafter Red Squad papers); Rice, "Black Radicalism," 75; J. F. Rice, *Up on Madison, Down on 75th Street: A History of the Illinois Black Panther Party, Part 1* (Evanston, IL: The Committee, 1983), 23.
21. "Interview Report: Black Panther Party," February 8, 1969, box 229, folder 3, item 49, Red Squad papers.
22. "Report Regarding Black Panther Party," December 18, 1968, box 229, folder 1, item 22, Red Squad papers.
23. Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar, "Brown Power to Brown People: Radical Ethnic Nationalism, the Black Panthers, and Latino Radicalism, 1967–1973," in *In Search of the Black Panther Party*, edited by Jama Lazerow and Yohuru Williams, 276–77.
24. Charles E. Jones, "Arm Yourself or Harm Yourself: People's Party II and the Black Panther Party in Houston, Texas," in *On the Ground*, edited by Judson Jeffries, 23–24.
25. Paul Alkebulan, *Survival Pending Revolution: The History of the Black Panther Party* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007), 98–116. Alkebulan's chapter on women and the Black Panther Party exhibits experiences from women from local chapters as well as the national headquarters in Oakland. This chapter fulfills its goal of providing informative and rich details of the various roles of female BPP members across chapters. However, Tracye Matthews's piece is a critical analysis of the gender politics of the BPP.
26. Tracye Matthews, "'No One Ever Asks What a Man's Role in the Revolution Is': Gender and the Politics of the Black Panther Party, 1966–1971," in *The Black Panther Party (Reconsidered)*, edited by Charles E. Jones, 268.
27. Tracye Matthews, panelist, "Women and The Black Panther Party," Dusable Museum of African American History, May 13, 2010, audio file in possession of author.
28. Robyn Ceanne Spencer, "Inside the Panther Revolution: The Black Freedom Movement and the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California," in *Groundwork: Local Black Freedom Movements in America*, edited by Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 306–7.
29. Reynaldo Anderson, "Practical Internationalists: The Story of the Des Moines, Iowa, Black Panther Party," in *Groundwork*, edited by Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, 283–84, 290; Ericka Huggins, interview by author, March 24, 2011. The Des Moines chapter allied with the National Welfare Rights Organization to oppose the treatment of poor women and the forced break up of black families in the city. See Anderson, "Practical Internationalists," 290.
30. C. Clark Kissinger, "Serve the People," *Guardian*, May 17, 1969, 7.
31. King, "Presentation"; Joan McCarty, interview by author, October 19, 2009.
32. C. Clark Kissinger, "Serve the People," 7; Angela D. LeBlanc-Ernest, "'The Most Qualified Person to Handle the Job': Black Panther Party Women, 1966–1982," in *The Black Panther Party (Reconsidered)*, edited by Charles E. Jones, 311.
33. King, "Presentation"; McCarty interview.
34. *Comrade Sisters*, documentary produced by Phyllis J. Jackson and Christine L. Minor, 2005, 4:39–5:45.
35. The survey consisted of 119 members from across the country. The study revealed

that 81 percent of female members held high-school diplomas, as opposed to 68 percent of male members. Sixty-three percent of female members had at least one semester of college, as opposed to 43 percent of male members. For more information about the surveys, see Alkebulan, *Survival Pending Revolution*, 98–99, 151n1.

36. Yvonne King, panelist, “Women and The Black Panther Party,” Dusable Museum of African American History, May 13, 2010, audio file in possession of author.

37. Brenda Harris, interview by author, September 21, 2009; McCarty interview.; Ann Kendricks and Donna Calvin, interviews by author, January 5, 2011.

38. For anecdotal examples of female members who would not accept gender inequality in Detroit, see Ahmad Rahman, “Marching Blind: The Rise and Fall of the Black Panther Party in Detroit,” in *Liberated Territory*, edited by Yohuru Williams and Jama Lazerow, 187–88, 204–5.

39. “Note,” *The Black Panther*, 1968, 24.

40. Bernard Farber, “Purpose of Black Panthers Outlined by Panther Speaker Here,” *Roosevelt Torch*, December 9, 1968, 3.

41. Yvonne King, interview by Phyllis J. Jackson, in *Comrade Sisters*, 32:51–33:20.

42. Henry “Poison” Gaddis, supplement during question-and-answer session to King, Presentation. Gaddis was a field secretary of the Illinois chapter and helped organize the Rainbow Coalition.

43. Joan Gray, interview, *The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection*, tape 3, reel 6, TRT: 00:28:43, August 22, 2003.

44. Hank Gaddis, interview by author, October 14, 2006.

45. Harris interview; Wanda Ross, interview by the author, May 25, 2007; Gray interview, *The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection*; Kendricks and Calvin interviews.

46. Akua Njeri, *My Life with the Black Panther Party* (Oakland, CA: Burning Spear, 1991), 45–46.

47. Kathleen Cleaver, “Back to Africa: The Evolution of the International Section of the Black Panther Party,” in *The Black Panther Party (Reconsidered)*, edited by Charles E. Jones, 239.

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