



The Black Panther Party

By Deacon Fred E. Caldwell

Day 33
March 31, 2023

Read Genesis 14:14, 16

“When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household and went in pursuit as far as Dan ... He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people.”

Critical Race Facts:

In Paris, Texas in 1920, brothers Irving and Herman Arthur worked on a white owned farm where they suffered ongoing abuse. When the Arthurs decided to leave in search of better working conditions, the farm owners tried to stop them with gunfire and then alleged that the Arthurs had wounded them. Soon after Irving and Herma were arrested and jailed, local whites began posting signs throughout town advertising their impending lynching. A mob of 3000 gathered to watch as both men were tied to a flagpole at the fairgrounds, tortured, and burned to death.

Today's Prayer:

Lord, thank You for the men and women who stood to ensure the safety and security of our family and communities. As they have protected us, let us seek the protection of future generations. In Jesus name, amen.

According to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “the principle of self-defense, even involving weapons and bloodshed has never been condemned, even by Gandhi.” It was this view of self-defense that led to the founding of The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP). The BPP was founded in October 1966, in Oakland, California by Huey P. Newton, and Bobby Seale. The party’s original purpose was to patrol Black neighborhoods to protect residents from acts of police brutality. Newton and Seale canvassed their community asking residents about issues of concern. They compiled the responses and created their Ten Point Platform. This served as the foundation of the Black Panther Party. The ten points included freedom, full employment, Black people to be exempt from the military, decent housing, etc. However, because of their practice of armed self-defense against police as well as revolutionary elements, they were targeted by the FBI and local law enforcement groups.

However, despite its militant stance, the BPP also provided free breakfast for school children, sickle cell anemia screening, legal aid, and adult education. Countering police brutality was at the core of the Black Panthers mission. One of the central catalysts for their formation was the death of Matthew Johnson, an unarmed Black 16-year-old who was shot to death by police in San Francisco. In order to monitor police and discourage similar events from happening, the BPP founders Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale devised a strategy in which they sent armed teams to observe police activity in Black neighborhoods. Black Lives Matter movement was formed under similar circumstances, following the acquittal of George Zimmerman for killing the unarmed 17-year-old Trayvon Martin in 2013.

At its peak in 1968, the Black Panther Party had roughly 2,000 members. The organization later declined because of internal tensions, deadly shootouts and FBI counterintelligence activities aimed at weakening the organization. William O’Neal was an FBI informant in Chicago, Illinois, where he infiltrated the local BPP. He is known for being the catalyst of the 1969 police/FBI assassination of Fred Hampton, head of the Illinois BPP.

Personally, growing up in Chicago I saw the BPP as another Civil Rights groups like the NAACP and SCLC. When they were present (rifles and all), our neighborhood was safer, and we didn’t have to worry about police brutality. They even kept the local street gangs in check.

Police brutality is still an issue and a struggle to keep our families safe from harm and danger. Matthews 26: 51-52 tells of Apostle Peter striking off the ear of a servant of the High Priest with his sword in defense of Jesus. Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword”.

Questions to Ponder

What are your memories of the Black Panther Party? How have you interrelated with other Civil Rights organizations? How have you contributed to their cause? How have you benefited from their presence and practices?

