



On the Ground: The Black Panther Party in Communities across America

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The Black Panther Party suffers from a distorted image largely framed by television and print media, including the Panthers' own newspaper. These sources frequently reduced the entire organization to the Bay Area where the Panthers were founded, emphasizing the Panthers' militant rhetoric and actions rather than their community survival programs. This image, however, does not mesh with reality. The Panthers worked tirelessly at improving the life chances of the downtrodden regardless of race, gender, creed, or sexual orientation. In order to chronicle the rich history of the Black Panther Party, this anthology examines local Panther activities throughout the United States—in Seattle, Washington; Kansas City, Missouri; New Orleans, Louisiana; Houston, Texas; Des Moines, Iowa; and Detroit, Michigan.

This approach features the voices of people who served on the ground—those who kept the offices in order, prepared breakfasts for school children, administered sickle cell anemia tests, set up health clinics, and launched free clothing drives. The essays shed new light on the Black Panther Party, re-evaluating its legacy in American cultural and political history. Just as important, this volume gives voice to those unsung Panthers whose valiant efforts have heretofore gone unnoticed, unheard, or ignored.

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