



Politically Repressing the Proletariat: The Struggle Between The U.S Government and Black Nationalist Organizations



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Research Purpose:

- Purpose Statement: The dissolution and transformation of the Detroit chapter of the Black Panther Party (BPP) and the Republic of New Afrika (RNA) have less to do with the forever-changing political climate or their radical political philosophies, but more to do with use of political repression that both organizations were/are subjected to. As a result of these Black political organizations being neutralized, the government has been able to undermine the development of Detroit's Black community.
- Research Questions: How did political repression factor into neutralizing Black political organizations? How has the Black working-class been impacted by the dissolution of the Republic of New Afrika and Black Panther Party in Detroit?

Research Rationale:

- Despite mainstream media perspectives demonizing Black nationalism, Black political organizations subscribing to nationalist ideologies, were impactful in their communities: protecting their neighborhoods and advocating on behalf of the Black working-class.
- This research project attempts to change the narrative around Black nationalism, illustrating the violent role the U.S. government played in disrupting Black political organizations and the Black community.

Methodology:

- Historical/Narrative Research Design
- Archival research
- Semi-structured interviews
- My research counters the mainstream narratives surrounding Black nationalism and Black political organizations.

Interview Protocol:

- For this research project I propose conducting semi-structured interviews with members, citizens, supporters, and/or people closely affiliated to either the Republic of New Afrika or the Detroit chapter of the Black Panther Party
- Semi-structured, hour-long interview
- Conduct about 10-15 interviews



Defining Key Terms:

- Black Power Movement: A socio-political movement of various Black radical organizations and philosophies rooted in racial pride, self-determination, and black economic development in the late 1960's throughout the 1970's.
- The Black Panther Party (BPP): A Black political organization subscribing to portions of revolutionary nationalist philosophies. The BPP focused on communal political engagement and armed-resistance to police brutality in working-class Black communities.
- The Republic of New Afrika (RNA): A Black revolutionary nationalist organization making territorial claims to the subjugate states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina to create an independent Black republic
- Political Repression: A state-sanctioned intervention to control and neutralize political challengers that question the status quo. Following Alan Wolfe's (1973) framework of state repression, there are three categories of political repression: covert repressive action, overt repressive action, and legal action.

Quotes:

- "... any argument that belittles political repression's brutal and far-reaching consequences is ahistorical and constitutes a dangerous erasure of its living legacy, political prisoners" (Farnia, 2017).
- "One early member of the party, Earl Anthony, who later admitted to being an FBI informant from the moment he joined, also admitted that one of his many duties was to deal large quantities of marijuana" (Rahman, 2020).

Discussion and Initial Findings:

- Political repression, more than any other factor, was responsible for neutralizing Black nationalist organizations in Detroit and across the nation.
- As a result of Black nationalist organizations dissolving in Detroit, the development of the Black working-class was disrupted by U.S. government operations (i.e. War on Drugs).



Leaders of the Black Nation (L to R): Queen Mother Moore, Raymond Willis, Oseijeman Adefunmi, Brother Imari, Betty Shabazz, Milton Henry, Joan Franklin, Obaboa Alowo, Wilbur Grattan Sr, Mwesi Chui

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