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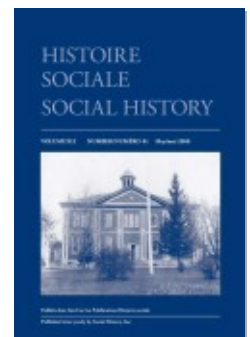
*Black Power: In the Belly of the Beast , and: In Search of  
the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary  
Movement (review)*

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They were increasingly participating in a society that was, at the time, beginning to put in place mechanisms to exclude them. The Crosbys were powerless to stop that.

Historians often fill gaps through generous “reading between the lines.” Regardless of what we do not know about Emma, the book’s insight is that the mere presence of non-Natives at Port Simpson made them representatives of a different series of cultural and lifestyle assumptions. *Good Intentions* humanizes all parties in the encounter. It is a good contribution to an increasing volume of literature that does so.

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JEFFRIES, Judson L. (ed.) — *Black Power: In the Belly of the Beast*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006. Pp. 308.

LAZEROW, Jama, and Yohuru WILLIAMS (eds.) — *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Movement*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006. Pp. 374.

The American Civil Rights movement invokes images of sit-ins, freedom rides, the soaring rhetoric of Martin Luther King, and idealistic whites and blacks joining hands to sing “We Shall Overcome.” Although inspiring and perhaps comforting, this is an incomplete account of the African-American struggle for equality. While historians may mention Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael’s call for black power, the urban uprisings, and the Black Panthers, these are less soothing and more difficult to understand than the non-violent, Christian-inspired campaign against segregation. These superbly edited books show that the often neglected “other” Civil Rights movement was equally important in understanding the long battle against racism. They bring to their subjects a variety of topics and approaches that will stimulate strong debate on their conclusions.

The term “black power” is a slippery one. It is most closely identified with Stokely Carmichael’s use of the term in the 1966 march in Mississippi and later developed in his book. To Carmichael, “Black Power ... is a call for black people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community. It is a call for black people to define their goals, to lead their own organizations ... It is a call to reject the racist institutions and values of this society” (Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*, Random House, 1967, p. 44). Carmichael’s definition is broad enough to allow Judson Jeffries to include an extremely diverse representation of groups, ideas, and individuals in his collection of essays on the topic.

Jeffries argues that the idea of black power long predates Carmichael. Slave revolts, W. E. B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, and Malcolm X provided the background for the ideology and tactics of the late 1960s, and “the Black Power

movement is firmly rooted in this rich tradition of Black protest.” By the mid-1960s, however, the concept became “distinct in many ways” as continued violence in the South, the glacial pace of racial progress, and the poverty and police brutality in the North led to growing impatience and disillusionment with non-violent tactics and a reconsideration of the goal of integration. The rejection of non-violence and integration into white society framed the movement, and the essays that follow illustrate these points. Each piece focuses on a group or leader in the era 1965–1970 that embraced more direct action (including violence), the celebration of black culture, and the need for economic and political power beyond just the vote.

The opening essay by Christopher Strain on the Bogalusa (Louisiana) Deacons for Defense and Justice is perhaps the strongest in the book. Crisply written, heavily documented, and tightly argued, it is a model of historical analysis. In response to Ku Klux Klan and police violence, the Deacons armed themselves to protect civil rights workers and black citizens. By defying the most obvious symbols of white authority, they tried to shatter the image of the passive African-American crushed by segregation. They not only stood up to the Klan and police, but gained the respect of national leaders, including Martin Luther King. Like most groups examined in the book, they soon collapsed, but “signified a new era in southern race relations in which Black deference to white supremacy could no longer be assumed.”

Harold Nelson examines a similar group: the Tuscaloosa (Alabama) “Defenders.” Again, in response to police and Klan brutality, an armed group of black veterans organized to resist white violence and to protect the black community. Black men with guns driving past KKK meetings and monitoring police within black neighbourhoods showed a new commitment to “manhood” and to meeting violence with force.

The continued violence and exploitation of blacks in the South led one group, the Republic of New Africa, to demand a separate state for African-Americans. Understandably, their petitions to the United States government, the United Nations, and foreign countries had little impact, but did provoke police attacks on their headquarters in Mississippi and Detroit and their demise in 1971. While their gestures may have been futile, Donald Cunnigen argues that the call for an independent black nation spoke to the frustration within the African-American community and a growing desire for black separatism.

In a brief but fascinating essay, Douglas Glasgow shows that black resistance was not limited to the South. His study of the Sons of Watts Improvement Association describes the mobilization of “the Parking Lotters” (young, unemployed black men) to provide jobs, education, and a clean-up of Los Angeles in the aftermath of the 1965 riot. Although they were a tiny group with little long-term success, Glasgow contends they showed that the desire for racial pride and community improvement was not limited to national leaders and organizations.

The economic element of black power is the focus of James Geschwender and Judson Jeffries’ account of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers in Detroit. Frustrated by the lack of equality in the auto industry and within the United Auto

Workers (in 1968, 95 per cent of foremen and 100 per cent of plant superintendents in the Chrysler plant were white), African-Americans organized a series of wildcat strikes, ran candidates for union positions, and adopted a Marxist analysis of capitalism. Internal fighting and gradual change within the union led the group to collapse by the early 1970s.

Less successful are two essays on the cultural element of black power. Komozi Woodard's study of Imamu Baraka's (the former LeRoi Jones) efforts for both political and cultural independence in Newark offers some insights into his evolution towards black nationalism, but little more. A chapter on Maulana (formerly Ron) Karenga and his group "Us" illustrates his Afro-centric cultural emphasis and role in the development of an African-American Studies curriculum, but is more interesting when it explores his later reflections on his mistakes, particularly conflict with the Black Panthers and the entrenched male chauvinism of black leaders.

The editor offers a piece on the Black Panthers in Baltimore, Cleveland, Indianapolis, and New Orleans that is most effective in showing the internal conflicts and government actions that weakened the group. Two other essays examine the most militant black groups: the underground element of the Black Panthers (the Black Liberation Army) and the Revolutionary Action Movement. Akinyele Omoja's article on the BLF stresses the importance of Geronimo Ji Jaga in organizing a paramilitary arm of the Panthers and notes their attacks on police led to a conflict within the Panthers over politics versus violence. Debate over goals and tactics were also significant in the RAM. The group was determined to "transform the Civil Rights Movement into a Black revolution" and tried to form an alliance with Malcolm X to move away from "bourgeois reformism" toward true revolution and to ally with third-world revolutionary struggles, including the National Liberation Front in Vietnam.

Following a brief but fascinating memoir by sociologist William Helmreich of a white academic's interaction with the St. Louis paramilitary group the Black Liberators, the editor concludes with an essay that examines the impact, heritage, and collapse of black power. Jeffries argues that "by the mid 1970s the Black Power movement was over" due to endless ideological arguments, a lack of financial resources, male chauvinism, and organized repression by police and the FBI. Despite its brevity, he suggests it laid the groundwork for the liberation struggles of women, Native Americans, and Hispanics.

The book makes clear the dissatisfaction with the goals and tactics of the earlier Civil Rights movement and the variety of groups and ideas that resulted. The editor deserves particular praise. Not only does he offer a stimulating introduction and conclusion, but he also authored one of the essays and co-wrote two others. More importantly, he knits a series of chapters on widely diverse topics into a coherent book.

Nearly all the essays on black power make reference to the Black Panther Party, the subject of Jama Lazerow and Yuhura Williams's book. The product of a 2003 conference at Wheelock College, it avoids a weakness common to collected conference papers, as each of the chapters refers to the other essays and flows clearly

into the next piece. Although the general outline of the birth, rise, and collapse of the Panthers is common knowledge, this volume shows the complexity and debatable heritage of the group.

The introduction notes the prevailing view of the Panthers as either courageous and uncompromising revolutionaries who defied racist police and organized breakfast programmes, medical clinics, and freedom schools for the community or merely violent thugs who terrified and intimidated both whites and blacks and were successful only in drawing media attention. The editors argue for new scholarship that “begins the process of historicizing, not simply judging the Black Panthers.” Robert Self follows with an essay that rejects the view that the Panthers destroyed the Civil Rights movement by provoking splits within the African-American community and fuelling a white backlash. He views the Panthers within a long tradition of black militancy and, like the black power movement, showed a rejection of the goals and tactics of the earlier non-violent campaign. Equally importantly, he argues that, by repudiating the “U.S. welfare-warfare state” and by supporting the “anticolonial struggle abroad,” they “captured in uncompromising language the collective economic and political grievances articulated by black radicals and white liberals since the 1930s.”

This provocative essay is followed by two rather puzzling chapters on the Panthers’ views of violence. Rob Bush’s “The Panthers and the Question of Violence” offers little more than encouragement to read the following essay by Bridgette Baldwin on the Panthers and the Ninth Amendment to the US Constitution. Baldwin, a law professor, contends the Panthers split over the issue of violence as a means of self-defence or as an acceptable tactic in guerrilla warfare. She argues the Panthers identified with the Revolutionary War generation’s justification of violence in their anti-colonial struggle with England and, in particular, with the Bill of Rights statement that the new Constitution “shall not be construed to deny or disparage others [rights] retained by the people.” There is some interesting material on the origins of the amendment, but it is not related in any direct way to the Panthers’ views on violence. Whatever they were, it is highly unlikely that the Panthers were constitutional scholars.

The section titled “From the Bottom Up and the Top Down: Personal Politics and the Black Panthers” contains three fascinating essays that meet the stated goal of “new perspectives” on the group. James Campbell contends historians have been preoccupied with the Black Panthers of Bobby Seale and Huey Newton in Oakland and have ignored the party in much of the rest of the nation. He shows that the organization was “highly decentralized” and was not a “single national movement but rather a congeries of local movements” linked loosely by a shared ideology. Panthers in Chicago were often different from those in California or New York. This point is developed in the chapter by Jama Lazerow on Frank “Parky” Grace of New Bedford, Massachusetts. Relaying in interviews, letters, trial records, and newspaper accounts, he traces the background of Grace, his involvement with the Panthers, false conviction for murder, and eventual exoneration for the crime. The chapter makes direct

and personal the abstract appeal of the Panthers to the urban poor and victims of the criminal justice system.

The final essay in this section also explores a new and fascinating topic: the FBI agents' engagement in a nationwide campaign to destroy the Panthers. Scholars are well aware of the near fanatical efforts of the agency to destroy the Panthers after Director J. Edgar Hoover labelled the group "the greatest threat to national security" in the country, but there is little on those involved in Hoover's COINTERPRO attack on the Panthers. Roz Payne provides it in a penetrating essay on FBI Agent William A. Condendet, who wrote hundreds of reports on the Panthers in Oakland and San Francisco used to justify the effort to destroy them. In interviews with the author, Condendet argued the Panthers were "big on rhetoric and short on action." They "were simply big talkers" who gained the attention of the media rather than violent revolutionaries, and he claimed to have opposed efforts to destroy the group. When confronted with his lengthy accounts of Panthers' personal and sex lives, he denied responsibility for their use to justify the assault on the organization. Payne gives readers a rare human face to the opposition to black radicalism.

The fourth section examines the impact and interaction of the Panthers with other radical groups including the Grey Panthers, the Latin Brown Berets, Puerto Rican nationalists, and the white New Left. The essays all agree that the flamboyance, rhetoric, and courage of the Panthers inspired a variety of groups to adopt their image and to try to adapt their militancy to their own struggles. Particularly impressive is Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar's examination of the Panthers and Latino radicalism that documents the gradual acceptance of young Chicanos and Puerto Ricans of the dress, rhetoric, and community programmes of the Panthers.

Joel Wilson examines the interaction between the Panthers and the Peace and Freedom Party. Although the Panthers generally rejected electoral politics, the imprisonment of Huey Newton led them into a fragile alliance with white groups. White radicals were split between "pragmatists" who feared that endorsement of the Panthers' calls for violence and revolution would destroy attempts to organize whites and "visionaries" who dismissed electoral efforts in favour of the politics of the street. Wilson succinctly summarizes the splits within the white protest movement by noting the two slogans: "Free Huey" and "A Fair Trial for Huey Newton." The first embraces revolutionary violence, the second, reform of existing institutions.

Less effective is David Barber's account of the tortured and continually shifting relationship between the Panthers and Students for a Democratic Society. While he does an effective job of sorting out the endless factions within both the Panthers and SDS, the article is often a polemic against white radicals. The Panthers were always principled and correct, while white radicals were racist and uncompromising. SDS was locked into "a white mind-set" that prevented it from making a clear commitment to the Panthers. Even when SDS declared the Black Panthers "the vanguard of the black revolution," it was merely a cynical attempt to keep SDS "in the driver's seat." Barber minimizes the Panthers'

demands for half the delegates in any white/black coalition and their dictate that SDS abandon all other issues to focus on racism within the white community. This essay seems outside the editors' goal of avoiding viewing the Panthers as either "heroes" or "thugs."

The final section offers new tools of inquiry to understand the Panthers. Davarian Baldwin notes the references to the Panthers in rap and hip-hop music and suggests the techniques of cultural studies as a useful tool in assessing their continued appeal. The Panthers' image and style were as important as their ideas and actions, as they created "an imagined community of blackness . . . that could speak to the everyday experiences of the urbanized globally oppressed." Tim Lake compares the Panthers to the post-World War I avant-garde Dada and surrealist movements that claimed "art was political and the political was art." Their guns, berets, and jackets were a form of performance art for revolution. Edward Morgan concludes with a study of media coverage of the Panthers that finds, not surprisingly, that both traditional and "new" journalists of the 1960s and 1970s focused on the most violent and sensationalist aspects of the group and ignored their social programmes and ideology. He notes, somewhat ironically, that media coverage of the 2003 conference that led to the book dismissed the idea of devoting a scholarly meeting to "criminals and thugs."

The book shows the continued public and historical interest in the Panthers' ideas, actions, and image and will force both those who idolize and those who dismiss the group to re-consider their positions. Were the Black Panthers true revolutionaries who mobilized the powerless and challenged the basic assumptions of American culture, or were they shrewd opportunistic thugs who bullied both blacks and whites? The answer is yes.

The vision of Martin Luther King in a suit and tie quoting Gandhi and Jesus remains more comfortable to whites (and many blacks) than black revolutionaries in leather jackets invoking Mao and Lenin. These two books remind us that both images are important in understanding the racial struggle in America.

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LARIN, Robert — *Canadiens en Guyane, 1754–1805*, Sillery (Québec), Éditions du Septentrion, 2006, 387 p.

Thanks to the work of scholars such as Bernard Cherubini, historians are now aware of the thousand or so Acadians who were transported after the British conquest of New France to French Guiana as part of the disastrous Kourou expedition of 1763–1764 launched by Louis XV's minister Choiseul. As Robert Larin correctly points out, however, the presence of French Canadians — distinguished from Acadians — among the immigrants to Guiana during and after the Seven Years War has been almost totally ignored. Larin, who has been working for some time on a comprehensive assessment of forced or voluntary