

The Black Panthers

By Matt Goerss
2010 Summer Institute

Abstract:

While students are generally familiar with the militant aspects of the Black Panther Party, they are often less aware of the other goals of the organization. In this lesson, students will read and analyze the Ten Point Program of the Black Panther Party in order to determine the purpose of the organization and whether or not its goals were reasonable. Students will also use their knowledge of the Black Panthers to determine whether aggression is a proper way to respond to adversity.

Essential Questions:

- What were the goals of the Black Panthers?
- Were the goals of the Black Panthers reasonable or unreasonable?
- Is non-violence or aggression the proper way to respond to adversity?

Assessment:

In this lesson, students will be assessed based on their analysis of the Black Panthers' Ten Point Program. They will complete the analysis sheet as they read each of the ten points, and they will make an overall judgment at the end about the effectiveness of the Black Panthers and the use of aggression during the civil rights movement.

Procedures:

- 1) *Setting the Purpose:* This lesson assumes that students have been introduced to both the non-violent and militant philosophies of the civil rights movement and have a strong understanding of the events that preceded the founding of the Black Panther Party. At the beginning of the class period, the teacher should hand out a small sheet of paper to the students and ask them to write down the five words or phrases that they would most associate with the Black Panthers. Before discussion the words that the students wrote down, the teacher should show the following photograph and ask how many of the students' words would describe it:

<http://pibillwarner.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/black-panthers-led8oct06a.jpg>

The teacher and students should then discuss the words that the students have written down and should focus on why students have these perceptions of the Black Panthers. The teacher should also ask students to think about whether they believe carrying guns is an effective method to respond to adverse situations.

- 2) The teacher should then hand out the Black Panthers' Ten Point Program reading to the class, along with the Ten Point Program analysis sheet. Students should complete the analysis sheet as they read each of the ten points.
- 3) After students have finished reading the Ten Point Program and analyzing each of the ten points, they should complete the final two analysis questions at the end of the analysis sheet. The teacher may wish to have students discuss these questions in small groups or as a class in order to determine how reasonable they believe the goals of the Black Panthers to be and also to determine the effectiveness of aggression in dealing with adversity.
- 4) (Optional) For additional information about the actions of the Black Panthers, the teacher should have students read an article from *The Black Panther*, which was the official newsletter of the organization. This article, "To Feed Our Children," discusses the free breakfast program developed by the Panthers in Oakland, California. After reading this article, the students should discuss whether their original judgment of the Black Panthers has changed.

Analysis of Local Primary Sources:

In this lesson, students will analyze an article from *The Black Panther*, which was originally distributed in California, where the Black Panthers originated.

Ties to National Primary Sources:

In this lesson, students will analyze the Ten Point Program of the Black Panther Party, which was the platform that defined the goals of the organization nationwide.

Annotated List of Materials and Resources:

Black Panthers Photograph

<http://pibillwarner.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/black-panthers-led8oct06a.jpg>

Black Panthers Ten Point Program

<http://www.blackpanther.org/TenPoint.htm>

"To Feed Our Children," *The Black Panther*, March 26, 1969

<http://www.marxists.org/history/usa/workers/black-panthers/1969/03/26.htm>

Ten Point Program Analysis Sheet