A TEACHER’S GUIDE

NINE LIVES
OF A BLACK PANTHER
A STORY OF SURVIVAL

By WAYNE PHARR
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY GUIDE

This study guide is organized chronologically by chapter, and it includes vocabulary words and important historical figures, as well as references to use for class discussions or as research topics. Additionally, some sections might lend themselves to acting out as mini-skits, or in classroom debates.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES


After reading the book and using the accompanying lesson plan as a resource, students will have the ability to:

- Situate the Black Panther Party within the larger context of Black Power activism
- Understand, interpret and critically engage Black Power autobiography
- Gain insight into the experiences of a rank and file member of the Black Panther Party
- Analyze the strategies and tactics of the Black Panther Party
- Understand how self-defense tactics played out on the local level within cities
- Describe how internal conflicts contributed a “split” within the Black Panther Party
- Explain how political repression and internal contradictions contributed to the demise of the Black Panther Party
ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Wayne Pharr is a real estate broker in Los Angeles. As a former member of the Los Angeles branch, Southern California Chapter of the Black Panther Party, Pharr reflects on his journey, providing insight into the accomplishments and failures of the Party. Wayne worked as a leader on the security team and led the defense against SWAT; he experienced first-hand many of the pivotal moments that shaped the Los Angeles branch and is the best person currently living to tell this story. Pharr has traveled throughout the country to speak about the experiences of the L.A. Panthers and the shoot-out on 41st and Central Avenue. Because of his close relationship with Geronimo Pratt, Wayne was one of the speakers at his funeral in Los Angeles in 2011. He has also been a guest speaker at several universities, at the Black Panther Film Festival and during Black History Month.

ABOUT THE CREATOR OF THIS GUIDE
Karin L. Stanford is the Associate Dean of the College of Humanities at California State University, Northridge. She has a Ph.D. in Political Science from Howard University and specializes in African American Politics and International Relations. She served as Chair of CSU Northridge’s Pan African Studies Department from 2010-2013. Karin Stanford has written several books and academic articles, including “Black Gold: African American State Legislators in California,” in The Journal of Race and Policy, Spring/Summer 2009; co-authored with Charles E. Jones, If We Must Die: African American Voices on War and Peace (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.), 2009; and “Keepin’ it Real in Hip Hop Politics: A Political Perspective of Tupac Shakur,” in Journal of Black Studies, 2010. Her teaching interests are African American Politics, Race and Public Policy and Social Movements.
HISTORICAL OVERVIEW
Climate of the 1960s and the Black Panther Party

At the beginning of the 1960s, many Americans believed they were standing at the dawn of a golden age. On January 20, 1961, Senator John F. Kennedy became president of the United States. His confidence that, as one historian put it, “the government possessed big answers to big problems” seemed to set the tone for the rest of the decade. However, that golden age never materialized. On the contrary, by the end of the 1960s it seemed that the nation was falling apart.

The New Frontier

During his presidential campaign in 1960, Kennedy had promised the most ambitious domestic agenda since the New Deal: the “New Frontier,” a package of laws and reforms that sought to eliminate injustice and inequality in the United States. But the New Frontier ran into problems right away: the Democrats’ Congressional majority depended on a group of Southerners who loathed the plan’s interventionist liberalism and did all they could to block it.

From Kennedy to Johnson

On November 22, 1963, Kennedy was assassinated, leaving the nation shocked, confused, and grieving. The event left a lasting impression on Americans. Taking Kennedy’s place, in 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson enacted his own expansive program of reforms. That year, Johnson declared that he would make the United States into a “Great Society” in which poverty and racial injustice had no place. He developed a set of programs that would give poor people “a hand up, not a handout.”

The War in Vietnam

Unfortunately, the War on Poverty was expensive—too expensive, especially as the war in Vietnam became the government’s top priority. There was simply not enough money to pay for the War on Poverty and the war in Vietnam. Conflict in Southeast Asia had been going on since the 1950s, and President Johnson had inherited a substantial American commitment to anti-communist South Vietnam. Soon after he took office, he escalated that commitment into a full-scale war. The war dragged on, and it divided the nation. Some young people took to the streets in protest, while others fled to Canada to avoid the draft. Meanwhile, many of their parents and peers formed a “silent majority” in support of the war.

The Fight for Civil Rights

The struggle for civil rights had defined the ’60s resulting from activities of organizations including the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, (SNCC), and the NAACP. SNCC, made up of young activists, began to receive the most attention after four black students sat down at a whites-only lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, in February 1960 and refused to leave. Their movement spread: Hundreds of demonstrators went back to that lunch counter every day, and tens of thousands clogged segregated restaurants and shops across the upper South. The protesters drew the nation’s attention to the injustice, brutality and capri-
ciousness that characterized Jim Crow.

In general, the federal government stayed out of the civil rights struggle until 1964, when President Johnson pushed a Civil Rights Act through Congress that prohibited discrimination in public places, gave the Justice Department permission to sue states that discriminated against women and minorities and promised equal opportunities in the workplace to all. The next year, the Voting Rights Act (1965) eliminated poll taxes, literacy requirements and other tools that southern whites had traditionally used to keep blacks from voting.

But these laws did not solve the problems facing African Americans: They did not eliminate racism or poverty and they did not improve the conditions in many black urban neighborhoods. Many black leaders began to rethink their goals, and some embraced a more militant ideology of black power and self-defense.

The Radical ’60s

Just as black power became the new focus of the Civil Rights Movement in the mid-1960s, other groups were growing similarly impatient with incremental reforms. Student activists grew more radical. They took over college campuses, organized massive antiwar demonstrations and occupied parks and other public places. Some even made bombs and set campus buildings on fire. At the same time, young women who had read The Feminine Mystique, celebrated the passage of the 1963 Equal Pay Act and joined the moderate National Organization for Women (NOW); as women became increasingly annoyed with the slow progress of reform, they too became more militant.

The counterculture also seemed to grow more outlandish as the decade wore on. Some young people “dropped out” of political life altogether. These “hippies” grew their hair long and practiced “free love.” Some moved to communes, away from the turbulence that had come to define everyday life in the 1960s.

In 1968, the brutal North Vietnamese Tet Offensive convinced many people that the Vietnam War would be impossible to win. The Democratic Party split, and at the end of March, Johnson went on television to announce that he was ending his reelection campaign. (Richard Nixon, chief spokesman for the silent majority, won the election that fall.) Martin Luther King Jr. and Bobby Kennedy, the two most visible leftists in American politics, were assassinated—King in April 1968 and Kennedy in June 1968. Police used tear gas and billy clubs to break up protests at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Furious antiwar protestors took over Columbia University in New York as well as the Sorbonne in Paris and the Free University in Berlin. And the urban riots that had erupted across the country every summer since 1964 continued and intensified.
The Black Panther Party


Gaining national prominence, the Black Panther Party became an icon of the counterculture of the 1960s. Although the Party emerged from black nationalist movements, ultimately, the Panthers condemned black nationalism as "black racism" and became more ideologically focused on socialist revolution without racial exclusivity. They instituted a variety of community service programs designed to alleviate poverty, improve health and well-being among inner city black communities. The Black Panther Party's most widely known programs were its armed citizens' patrols to evaluate behavior of police officers and its Free Breakfast for Children program.

Federal Bureau of Investigation Director J. Edgar Hoover called the party "the greatest threat to the internal security of the country," and he supervised an extensive Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO) of surveillance, infiltration, perjury, police harassment, and many other tactics designed to undermine Panther leadership, incriminate party members, and drain the organization of resources and manpower. Through these tactics, Hoover aimed to diminish the Party's threat to the general power structure of the U.S.

Black Panther Party membership reached a peak of several thousand by early 1969, then suffered a series of contractions due to government repression, legal troubles, incarcerations, internal disputes, expulsions and defections. Popular support for the Party declined even further after reports appeared detailing the group's involvement in illegal activities such as drug dealing and extortion schemes. By 1972, most Panther activity centered on the national headquarters and an award-winning school in Oakland, where the party continued to influence local politics. Party contractions continued throughout the 1970s; by 1980 the Black Panther Party comprised just 27 members.

Huey Newton and Bobby Seale

In 1961, Huey Newton met Bobby Seale when they were both students at Merritt College. In 1965, the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, an independent political party
in rural Alabama adopted the black panther as a symbol.

In 1966, Huey P. Newton was released from jail. With his friend Bobby Seale, he joined a black power group called the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM). RAM had a chapter in Oakland and followed the writings of Robert F. Williams, president of the Monroe, North Carolina branch of the NAACP. Dissatisfied with RAM’s failure to directly challenge police brutality and appeal to the "brothers on the block," Huey and Bobby sought to take matters into their own hands.

Newton and Seale founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense on October 15, 1966. They drafted the party’s first 10-point platform. Sixteen-year-old Bobby Hutton was their first recruit. The organization initially set forth a doctrine calling primarily for the protection of black neighborhoods from police brutality. What became standard Black Panther discourse emerged from a long history of urban activism, social criticism and political struggle by African Americans. The Panthers’ famous "policing the police" drew attention to the spatial remove that White Americans enjoyed from the police brutality that had come to characterize life in black urban communities.
Chapter 1

Vocabulary and Terms
- Black Student Alliance
- Black Student Unions
- Oppression
- Pig
- SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics)
- Bunker

Discussion Questions
1. Describe the relationship between the Los Angeles Police Department, the Black Student Alliance and the Black Panther Party.
2. What do you surmise were the goals of the LAPD/SWAT when they entered the Black Panther Party Headquarters on 41st and Central on December 8, 1969?
3. How did the Los Angeles Black Panther Party survive the attack by LAPD/SWAT?

Assignment
Research John Coltrane, then listen to Love Supreme, Afro Blue, and My Favorite Things, songs that Wayne states in the book were favorites of the Los Angeles Black Panther party. Explain Coltrane’s significance to Black Culture and Black Activism during the 1960s.

Chapter 2

Vocabulary and Terms
- Great Migration
- Emmitt Till
- Segregation
- Jim Crow

Discussion Questions
1. Discuss the historical events that impacted Wayne Pharr’s view of race as a child.
2. Why does Wayne refer to the train conductor as a “giant?”
3. How did Wayne’s view of his grandmother change after their encounter with the train conductor? Was Wayne correct in his assessment of his grandmother after that experience?

Assignment
Research the murder of Emmitt Till and the various responses to the tragedy.
Chapter 3

Vocabulary and Terms
- Desegregation
- Integration
- Socio-economic class

Discussion Questions
1. Integration is often seen as a positive aspiration for the Black community; explain Wayne’s view of integration as a child on the front line of its implementation.

2. Discuss the actions of Wayne’s teachers at his new school. Did they play a positive or negative role in his experience of integration?

3. Describe the role of “gun culture” in the life of Wayne and his family.

Chapter 4

Vocabulary and Terms
- Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Voting Rights Act of 1965
- Black Nationalism
- Riot
- Uprising
- Rebellion

Discussion Questions
1. Explain Martin Luther King Jr.’s and Malcolm X’s political philosophies. What were Wayne’s perspectives of each leader? Whose views resonated most with Wayne and why?

2. Apply the terms Riot, Uprising, and Rebellion to describe what happened in Watts 1965. Which term best describes the event and why do you consider that term the most appropriate?

Assignment
Compare and Contrast the Watts Rebellion of 1965 and the 1992 uprising in Los Angeles after the Rodney King trial.
Chapter 5

Vocabulary and Terms
- Blacks Arts Movement
- Watts Writers Workshop
- Low-rider/lowriding

Discussion Questions
1. Based on Wayne’s experiences, describe gang life in Los Angeles during the 1960s.
2. What was the Teen Post? Why was it an important organization for young teens growing up in South Central Los Angeles?
3. How did the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. impact Wayne Pharr?

Chapter 6

Terms and Vocabulary
- Afrocentric/Afrocentrism
- Capitalism
- Socialism

Discussion Questions
1. Describe the conflicting views between Wayne and his mother on the issue of attending college. What experiences underlie their perspectives?
2. Wayne was affiliated with various organizations as a teenager. Discuss how each of those experiences impacted his future.
3. Research the Us Organization and the Nation of Islam. Why did Wayne choose to join the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, instead of the Us Organization or Nation of Islam?

Assignment
Compare and contrast the Us Organization and the Nation of Islam with Civil Rights Organizations, such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, (SNCC), and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).
Chapter 7

Vocabulary and Terms

- Jackanape
- Marxism
- Proletariat
- Vietnam War
- Brown Berets
- Lumpenproletariat

Discussion Questions

1. Review the 10 Point Platform of the BPP. How and why was it developed? In our world today, which components are the most viable?

2. How was the Black Panther Party structured?

3. Why did the Vietnam War become so controversial?

4. How and why was Marxist Theory incorporated in the philosophy of the Black Panther Party?

5. Define the lumpenproletariat and how the concept diverges from traditional Marxist ideology.

Assignment

Research the various political views and activism for and against the Vietnam War.

Chapter 8

Vocabulary and Terms

- Militancy
- Mulford Act
- Peace and Freedom Party

Writing Prompt

Chapter 8 opens with the battle cry, “Free Huey Newton!” Write a brief essay on why Wayne comes to admire the leaders of the Black Panther Party.

Assignment 2

Research the background of Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, the two founders of the BPP. Why and how did they establish the organization?

Assignment 3

Research all or some of the members of the Central Committee, i.e. Elaine Brown, Eldridge Cleaver, Kathleen Cleaver and Emory Douglas. Why did they join the BPP and what led to their appointment as leaders? What skills did they bring to the BPP?

Assignment 4

Research Los Angeles BPP leaders, such as Bunchy Carter and Geronimo Pratt. What led these individuals to join the organization?
Chapter 9

Vocabulary and Terms

- Mandate
- Black Power
- Civil Rights
- Agent Provocateur
- Internecine

Discussion Questions

1. What was the Black Congress? Explain its organization and its significance to Black Political organizing. What role did the Organization Us play in Black Power politics in Los Angeles?

2. Explain Bunchy Carter’s Mandate and the reason he created it. Was it effective?

3. Discuss the murders of Black Panther Party leaders, Bunchy Carter and John Huggins at UCLA. Who was responsible for the murders? What impact did the removal of John Huggins and Bunchy Carter have on Los Angeles Panthers?

Assignment

Create a Wikipedia page for the Black Congress or other organizations that were important to Black activism in Los Angeles that do not appear in the online encyclopedia.

Chapter 10

Vocabulary and Terms

- Alpha
- Omega
- Bourgeois

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the reorganization of the Los Angeles Branch after the murders of Bunchy Carter and John Huggins.

2. The Free Breakfast Program was a signature program for the National Organization and in Los Angeles. Of all of the community service programs, what was the reason for the emphasis on free breakfast?

3. How did the relationship between the Southern California Chapter and the National Office change? Explain the rationale for the changing relationship between Los Angeles BPP and the National office.
Chapter 11

**Vocabulary and Terms**
- FBI
- COINTELPRO
- Comrade
- Revolutionary Nationalism
- Cultural Nationalism
- Head Start Program

**Discussion Questions**

1. Why did the BPP emphasize political education courses?

2. The use of the term “comrade” was a conscious decision for members of the BPP. Why did they use that term to address each other?

3. How does the information on the BPP/Us conflict presented in this chapter add to student’s knowledge of the problem between the two organizations? Which organization was right or wrong?

4. How could the differences between Cultural Nationalism and Revolutionary Nationalism lead to violence and warfare between the BPP and the Organization Us?

5. What was the long-term impact of the BPP’s Free Breakfast for Children Program nationally?

**Activities**

1. Which Sly and the Family Stone songs were most likely motivational to the Party? Why did you choose those songs?

2. Write an essay on two other Revolutionary Nationalism organizations and two Cultural Nationalism organizations. What are the differences between the two?

Chapter 12

**Vocabulary and Terms**
- Espionage
- Casualties
- Chairman Mao Tse-Tung (or Mao Zedong)’s Red Book

**Discussion Questions**

1. What would former inmates find appealing about the BPP, especially considering their own histories of confrontations with law enforcement?

2. Why was Wayne Pharr the target of law enforcement? Was their emphasis on Wayne justified?

**Writing Prompt**

If the beating of Wayne Pharr had been captured on camera today and uploaded on social media for the world to witness, what kind of responses could we expect? Can you provide examples of famous beatings captured on video and disseminated via media? Compare and contrast.
Chapter 13

Vocabulary and Terms

- Subjugation
- Revolutionary Political Conventions

Discussion Questions

1. What was the goal of the LAPD/Metro Squad regarding the BPP? Do you approve of the tactics they used to accomplish their goals? What other ways could they have attempted to reach consensus with the Party?

2. What were the tactics of Robert Charles, Mark Essex, and Tommy Ndugebele? Do you agree with the tactics they used to accomplish their goals?

Activity

Research the artwork of Emory Douglas. Choose one of his posters or images that you feel most represents the Black Panther Party experience and explain why.

Chapter 14

Vocabulary and Terms

- National Security
- Terrorism
- Domestic Terrorism
- Fortification

Discussion Question

In this chapter, the fortification of the Central Headquarters is described. Examine the process of fortification. What skills did BPP members contribute to the process? How do those contributions debunk any stereotypes or myths about BPP members?

Assignment 1

Research the history of J. Edgar Hoover, director of the FBI. Explain his concern about the influence of the Black Panther Party. What were the tactics of the FBI? From the standpoint of Hoover, were his tactics toward the BPP reasonable?

Assignment 2

Who were Fred Hampton and Mark Clark? Research the police attack that led to their murders and discuss of your view on what occurred from the point of view of the police and the Black Panther Party in Chicago.

Assignment 3

One of the pivotal events in Panther history is the Chicago 8 trial. Research the trial and describe Bobby Seale’s role in the events.
Chapter 15

Vocabulary and Terms

- Prison etiquette
- High Power
- Snitch tank
- Entrapment

Discussion Question

Why was SWAT the lead force in confronting the Black Panther Party on December 8, 1969, in Los Angeles?

Writing Prompt

Understanding prison etiquette is important to survival while incarcerated. Write an essay on some of the forms prison etiquette took during Wayne Pharr’s incarceration and why they were so important for him to understand. Do you know of other informal/unwritten rules that exist in prisons today?

Chapter 16

Vocabulary and Terms

- Ethics
- Free Love

Discussion Questions

1. Describe the behavior of Wayne’s attorney, Arthur Alexander. What is your assessment of his behavior during the trial overall, and toward Wayne?

2. Explain the concept “free love,” which was an important part of the 1960s- and 70s culture. Is “Free Love” ethical? How did it affect women and families?

Assignment

Research Attorney Johnnie Cochran, Leo Branton, and Luke McKissack. Choose one and explain his significance to the Black Community in general and to the Los Angeles Black Panther Party. Why would these lawyers choose to work on these cases? What in their backgrounds can explain why they would? Are you aware of any current or contemporary lawyers who hold similar sentiments?
Chapter 17

Vocabulary and Terms
- Soledad Brothers
- Jonathan Jackson
- Angela Davis
- Treason
- Republic of New Afrika
- Weather Underground

Discussion Questions
1. What did Roland Freeman’s experience in Oakland suggest about the differences between the experiences of some local chapters and the Central Headquarters?
2. Why did Lester Jackson attempt to help Wayne? What are your thoughts about Wayne’s response to Lester?
3. What was the basis of the cleavages within the BPP?

Assignment
Discuss Huey Newton’s letter to the National Liberation Front. Did Huey Newton’s actions signal treason?

Writing Prompt
Consider the involvement and roles of Elaine Brown, Kathleen Cleaver, Saundra Pratt and Angela Davis. How do you view women in the BPP and the dynamics of gender roles in the party?

Chapter 18

Vocabulary and Terms
- 2nd Amendment
- Stand Your Ground Laws
- National Rifle Association (NRA)

Discussion Questions
1. What is the significance of the chapter title, “Torn Asunder”?
2. Was it fair for the lawyers to reject the will of BPP members to testify on their own behalf during the trial?
3. What was the posture of Judge Dell toward the Black Panther Party and their lawyers? Do you consider him a fair and impartial judge?
4. Describe the behavior of Geronimo Pratt during the trial. What is your assessment of him as a Black Panther and a trial defendant? Were his actions justified?

Writing Prompt
Take a close look at the photo on page 241 of the weapons confiscated. What do you think the white spokesman is discussing in the press conference? Consider the 2nd Amendment and current “stand-your-ground” laws. In light of the National Rifle’s Association’s defense of the right to own and bear arms almost anywhere, including churches, how would the NRA view the rights of the Black Panther Party to bear arms today?
Chapter 19

Vocabulary and Terms

- Conspiracy
- Self-defense
- Gestapo
- Nazi

Discussion Questions

1. After viewing the evidence against the BPP, what are your thoughts on the verdicts?

2. Of the 27 counts against the BPP members, the jury found them not guilty on conspiracy to murder and not guilty on most of the other charges. What is your overall assessment of the trial?

Chapter 20

Vocabulary and Terms

- Fascism
- Black Liberation Army (BLA)
- Fragging / Billy Dean Smith

Discussion Questions

1. Why did Huey Newton and David Hilliard refuse to provide an alibi for Geronimo Pratt?

2. Assess Wayne Pharr’s move back to the integrated neighborhood of his childhood. Why did he make that move?
Chapter 21

Vocabulary and Terms

- Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA)
- Stockholm Syndrome
- Torture
- Entrepreneur
- Hustler
- Irony

Discussion Questions

1. Why did law enforcement suspect Wayne of being involved with the Symbionese Liberation Army?

2. What does Wayne’s choice of real estate as a profession indicate about his growth and development into adulthood?

Epilogue:
Honor and Sacrifice

Vocabulary and Terms

- Post Traumatic Stress (PTSD)
- Remorse
- Mortality Rate
- Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders
- The Church Committee

Discussion Questions

1. What does “all power to the people” mean?

2. What is Wayne’s ultimate message in “Honor and Sacrifice”?

3. What is the significance of the book’s title, Nine Lives of a Black Panther?