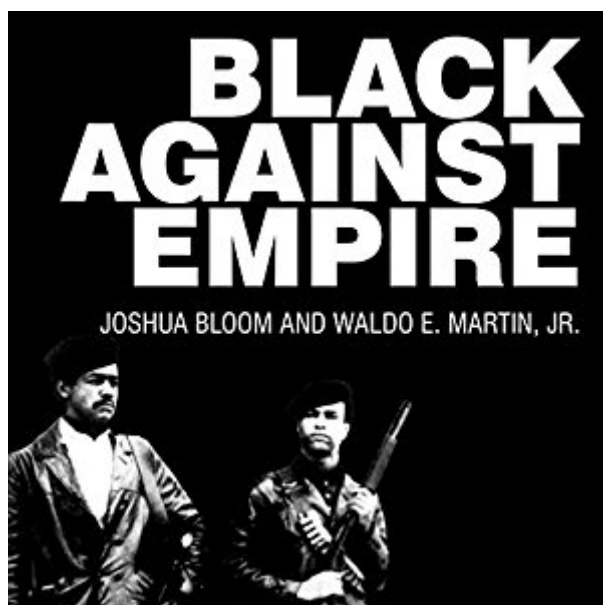


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# Black Against Empire: The History And Politics Of The Black Panther Party



## Synopsis

In Oakland, California, in 1966, community college students Bobby Seale and Huey Newton armed themselves, began patrolling the police, and promised to prevent police brutality. Unlike the Civil Rights Movement that called for full citizenship rights for blacks within the US, the Black Panther Party rejected the legitimacy of the US government and positioned itself as part of a global struggle against American imperialism. In the face of intense repression, the Party flourished, becoming the center of a revolutionary movement with powerful allies around the world. *Black Against Empire* is the first comprehensive overview and analysis of the history and politics of the Black Panther Party. The authors analyze key political questions, such as why so many young black people across the country risked their lives for the revolution, why the Party grew most rapidly during the height of repression, and why allies abandoned the Party at its peak of influence. Bold, engrossing, and richly detailed, this book cuts through the mythology and obfuscation, revealing the political dynamics that drove the explosive growth of this revolutionary movement and its disastrous unraveling.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 18 hours and 11 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Tantor Audio

Audible.com Release Date: April 30, 2016

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B01ENXEJM4

Best Sellers Rank: #34 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Politics & Current Events > Political History & Theory #87 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > Minority Studies #169 in Books > History > Americas > United States > African Americans > Discrimination & Racism

## Customer Reviews

I have read a lot about the Black Panthers including most of the memoirs (*Seize the Time*, *Taste of Power*, *This Side of Glory*, *Soul on Ice*, *Assata*, *Panther Baby*) and several good books on narrower pieces of the history (*Living for the City*, *Survival Pending Revolution*, *Murder of Fred Hampton*). So I was looking for a big picture, and didn't expect to learn much detail here. But I was shocked.

There was something new on every page. Who knew that the FBI paid a highly placed agent (William O'Neal) to write stories in the Black Panther encouraging party members to torture suspected informants? Or that the commonly reproduced "October 1966" ten point program is actually from July 1968? Or that women Black Panthers hotly contested gender dynamics in the Party at the United Front on Fascism Conference? And even the events I was very familiar with (like the early police patrols in Oakland, or storming the Assembly in Sacramento) the authors put these in a whole new light, placing the events in a broader context and relation to one another in a way that it all makes sense. Most important for me was the analysis. The authors show HOW the Black Panther Party built POWER, step by step. In Part I, they trace the roots of the Panthers' political practices, and explain their initial successes patrolling the police. It's telling that when black people figured out how to use gun laws to build political power, Reagan and the Republicans enacted laws to restrict the right to bear arms! In Part II, the authors show how the Party shifted gears once they couldn't legally run the armed patrols any more. They go through this on all levels (theoretical discussion, lots of historical detail).

"You state that the Bureau under the CIP [COINTELPRO] should not attack programs of community interest such as the [Black Panther Party] "Breakfast for Children." You state that this is because many prominent "humanitarians" both white and black, are interested in the program as well as churches which are actively supporting it. You have obviously missed the point..." J. Edgar Hoover

Black Against Empire is one of the most important books of the year. With anti-gun legislation in full swing, the Occupy Movement nowhere to be found, and surviving Black Panthers still around, the first comprehensive history of the Black Panther Party could not have come at a better time. The history and political analysis provided by Martin and Bloom is fresh, compelling and inspiring. If you talk with two people who claim to know the Panthers, it's evident how controversial they are. Their history is often disputed, and many have strong opinions about their legacy in the context of the revolutionary movement. It's well-known that J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI listed the Black Panthers as the number one threat to the internal security of the United States, and sought to destroy the Party through various means, including a massive disinformation campaign. It is precisely because of this disinformation that one has to be careful when considering their source of information about the Panthers. Black Against Empire contains over eighty pages of extensive notes from a wealth of primary sources that include memoirs, interviews, recordings, the Black Panther Newspaper, newspaper articles, audio reels, COINTELPRO documents, posters, dissertations and more. When reading the book, it immediately becomes evident that the authors know what they are

talking about.

When I moved to Berkeley in 1969, the Black Panther Party was in its heyday. Only three years earlier, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale had begun building the party around an image and a name they'd appropriated from other Black organizations then active in those turbulent years of the Vietnam War and exploding ghettos. Yet before the decade of the 1970s was out, the Black Panther Party had all but disappeared. Black Against Empire, Joshua Bloom and Waldo Martin's excellent study of the Panthers and their politics, makes clear why and how they grew into such a force -- and why the party collapsed so few years later. The pivotal event in the history of the Black Panther Party was the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4, 1968. Before that day, the Party was just one of hundreds of activist African-American organizations, most of them vanishingly small, in Black ghettos and on university campuses all across the country. The Panthers were set apart from others by their distinctive black outfits, by carrying guns in public to defend themselves against police brutality, by their outspoken opposition to the Vietnam War, and, perhaps most of all, by their willingness to encompass people of other ethnicities. As a result, they had grabbed headlines locally and were growing at a fast pace, attracting African-Americans in their late teens and twenties who were disillusioned by the timidity of their elders in the Civil Rights Movement -- but the party's activities were largely limited to Oakland, Berkeley, and nearby cities. However, when Rev.

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