

Radical Black (Panthers) Ecology

What was the Black Panther Party?

A revolutionary Black nationalist group founded in 1966 in Oakland, CA. They believed that Black people are a colony within the United States. They sought to lead an inter(national) revolution of Black folks, pursuing liberation through armed protest, community organization, and mutual aid. Panther's "survival" social programming also provided food and essential services to Black communities across the country.



Who was Huey Newton?

Dr. Huey Percy Newton (1942-1989) was the BPP's co-founder, Minister for Defense, and ideological leader. Newton helped lead the Party to national prominence through the BPP's armed citizen police patrol and armed march through the California State Capitol. His innovative political philosophy and prolific writings have helped keep the Panthers at the forefront of revolutionary consciousness to this day.



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The Panthers' policies had ecological implications: they sought to influence Black peoples' struggle to survive within their environment. They pushed oppressed peoples to change their environments through revolution.



What is Radical Black Ecology?

A sub-discipline that seeks to study how understand how people in the Radical Black Tradition have conceived of and impacted their surroundings. A re-conception of the field: re-defining 'environment' to include the places humans exist, with a focus on Black spaces.

Methodology:

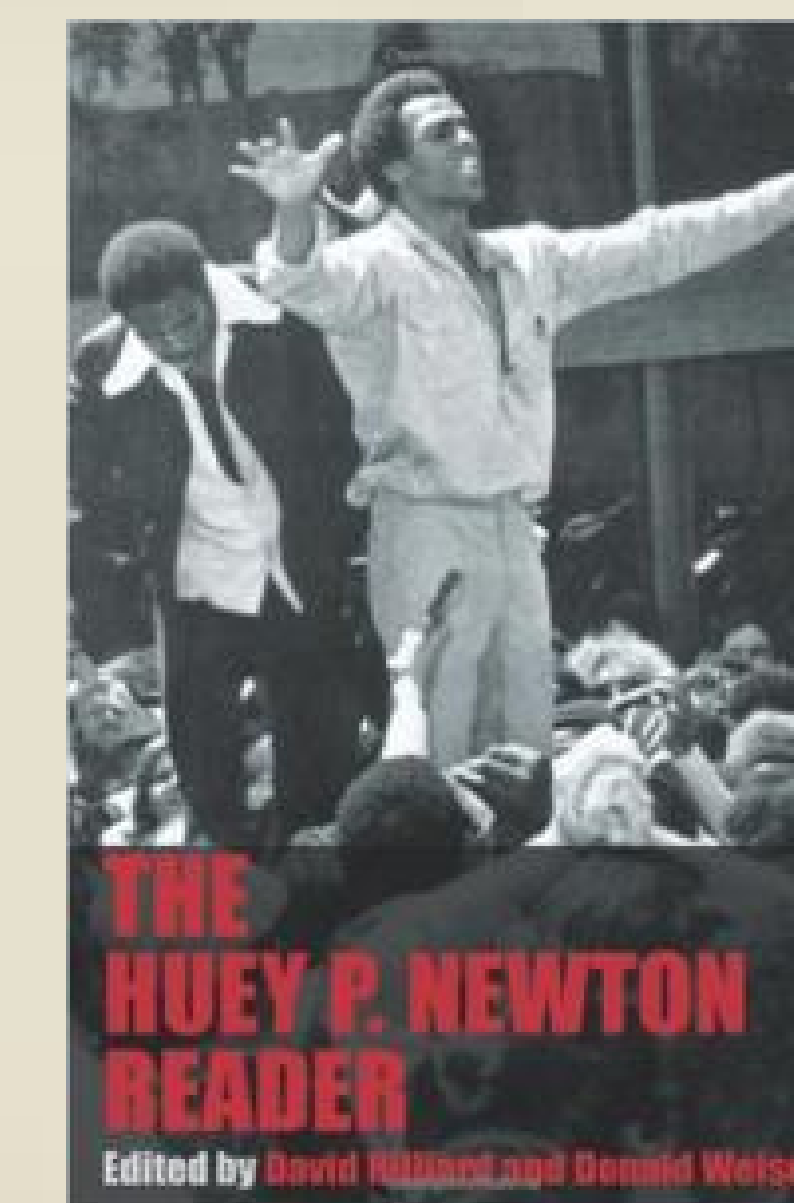
Little ecological analysis has been done of BPP political writings, so I sought to understand how the Party understood and tried to affect their environments. Using this framework, I conducted a qualitative analysis on several entries from The Huey P. Newton Reader, a compilation of Panther documents and Newton's essays.

Excerpts:

"4. We Want Decent Housing Fit For The Shelter of Human Beings. We believe that if the White Landlords will not give decent housing to our Black community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people."
-Black Panther Ten Point Program (1966)

"We had seen the Oakland police and the California Highway Patrol begin to carry their shotguns in full view as another way of striking fear into the community." -"The Founding of the Black Panther Party"

"A Ten-Point Program is not revolutionary in itself, nor is it reformist. It is a survival program. We, the people, are threatened with genocide ... in order to change it, there must be a total transformation." -"Speech Delivered at Boston College" (1970)



Key Takeaways:

- Ecological thought permeates more than just scientific writing, and political texts require further analysis through this lens.
- BPP writings have many instances of ecological thought, both physical (the living conditions within ghettos) and non-physical (the fear caused by police presence in Black communities)

Sources

