

# THE BLACK PANTHERS: VANGUARD OF THE REVOLUTION

GRADES 8-12  
CLASSROOM GUIDE

USING  
THIS GUIDE ▶

DISCUSSION  
QUESTIONS & ▶

MEDIA LITERACY  
RESOURCES ▶

SUPPLEMENTAL  
RESOURCES ▶

ARTICLES AND  
REVIEWS ▶

ABOUT  
THE FILM ▶

POST-VIEWING  
ACTIVITIES

## TEACHING THE FILM:

**The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution** is a documentary film about the history of the Black Panther Party. A class screening of the film may complement a social studies, ethnic studies or US history curriculum. Taught in conjunction with this guide, the film will encourage students to think critically about civil rights, activism, and the history of policing in the United States. Discussion questions and supplemental materials facilitate further research into related topics such as government surveillance, the role of media in shaping a movement, and the relationship between peaceful and violent protest.

All SFFS Youth Education materials are developed in alignment with California educational standards for media literacy. SFFS Youth Education welcomes feedback and questions on all printed study materials.

Please direct all comments and queries to Keith Zwölfer, Youth Education Manager:

San Francisco Film Society Youth Education  
39 Mesa Street, Suite 110 · The Presidio San Francisco, CA 94129-1025  
kzwolfer@sffs.org  
415.561.5040

SAN FRANCISCO  
**FILM SOCIETY**



## USING THIS GUIDE

This study guide is intended to flexibly support educators in preparing for and following up on a class screening of **The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution**.

Support materials are intended to facilitate group discussion, individual and collaborative creative exercise, subject-based learning and access to resources for further investigation of material. Educators are encouraged to adapt and abridge the content as necessary to meet their unique learning objectives and circumstances.

## ABOUT THE FILM

Stanley Nelson, the award-winning chronicler of African American life, history and social movements, shines a light on the iconic Black Panther Party (BPP), charting its meteoric rise in the 1960s and its disintegration several years later. Fed up with racial discrimination, poverty and police brutality, urban Black youth in Oakland, CA were ready for radical change. For them, the BPP was the vehicle. While the flame of revolution the Panthers ignited engendered national and international support, FBI head J. Edgar Hoover sought to snuff the group out labeling it, “The greatest Internal threat to the nation.” Raids and killings by police, mass arrests, infiltration, repression, exile and expensive trials followed. Former leader Ericka Huggins acknowledges, “We were making history and it wasn’t nice and clean; it wasn’t easy.” The film offers candid accounts by lesser known rank and file members—many of them women—who did the Black Panthers’ daily work. Packed with anecdotes and new revelations, the documentary captures the excitement of a time filled with idealism, internationalism and impatience. Beyond explicating the party’s compelling political program, archival footage also reveals the members’ swaggering image, seductive style and sex appeal. With police brutality, the militarization of police departments and government surveillance, once again at the forefront of the American conversation, *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution* is not just timely, but profoundly resonant.

Program Note: brief violence, brief profanity

Stanley Nelson (USA, 2015)  
116 minutes, English, Grades 7-12

### Recommended Subject Areas:

African American Studies  
Ethics/Religion  
History  
Journalism  
Political Science  
Social Studies

### Key concepts / buzzwords:

Activism  
African-American History  
Civil Rights  
Education  
Government Surveillance  
Media  
Oakland, CA  
Organized Resistance  
Policing  
Racism  
US History  
Violence  
Youth



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### PRE-VIEWING TOPICS AND DISCUSSION:

The Black Panther Party occupies an iconic place in American cultural imagination, but it is unlikely that students fully understand what the Party stood for and what forces it worked against. Before watching this dense and evocative film, ask students to share their understanding of the Black Panther Party.

- Who were the Black Panthers?
- How did their movement come together and what were their goals?
- What social and political forces were they working to undermine?
- What was their vision for America?
- Were they successful in their goals? What ended the prominence of the Black Panther Party?

Ask students to keep this discussion in mind as they watch the film. You may wish to revisit these questions after the film has ended.

### POST-VIEWING DISCUSSION:

#### Character and Story

- 1) Who were the Black Panthers?
  - What did the Black Panther Party stand for?
  - What were the Party's goals?
  - What social realities were the Panthers responding to?
  - Describe their vision for a more just and equal America.
- 2) Who were the Party's founders?
  - Describe the distinct personalities of Huey Newton

and Bobby Seale.

- How did Huey and Bobby's skills and personalities compliment each other?
- Who was Eldridge Cleaver?
- What was his role in the Black Panther Party?
- How did he expand the appeal of the Party?
- What happened to all of these people as the Party gained notoriety and power?

3) What kinds of people were attracted to the Black Panther Party?

- Describe the culture and values that formed the foundation of the Black Panthers.
  - How were the values that the Black Panther Party promoted different than traditional values in the Black community before that time?
  - Why was the Party so attractive to young people, to urban people and to well-educated people?
  - What did the Panthers give them that American society had otherwise failed to deliver?

## WHO WERE THE BLACK PANTHERS?

4) What kinds of different women did you encounter in this film?

- What roles did women play in the Black Panther Party?
- In what ways was membership with the Panthers liberating for women, and in ways was it oppressive?
- What is the historic relationship between Black liberation struggles and the civil rights movement and the struggle for women's rights and feminism?
- What is the meaning of the term "intersectionality" and how does it apply to the role of women in the Black Panther Party?

5) How did the culture and geography of the city of



Oakland contribute to the formation of the Black Panther Party?

- How was Oakland like other US cities and how was it different?
- How does the legacy of the Black Panther Party live on in Oakland today?

## Context

1) What is the relationship between the Black Panther Party and the police?

- What kind of policing were the Panthers reacting to?
- What methods did the Panthers use to check the power of the police?
- Why did they need guns? How did the presence of visible weapons change the relationship between observers and the police?
- How does this compare to the citizen witness and filming of police brutality that catalyzed the Black Lives Matter movement?
- Are there connections between the Panthers' relationships with the police and the relationships between police and protesters today?
- What has changed and what remains the same?

2) What was the relationship between the Black Panthers and the media?

- How did the media portray the Black Panthers?
- In what ways did the Black Panthers use the media to promote their work?
- What strategies did the movement employ to create a public presence that captured national attention?
- How did the rest of the country react to the media image of the Black Panthers?
- Do you think this empowered other people to join

the movement? How did Black people across the country react to the media image of the Panthers?

- How did White America react to the Panthers?
- What can we learn from the example of the Black Panthers about the symbiotic relationship between protest movements and the media?

## WHAT WAS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BLACK PANTHERS AND THE MEDIA?

- How does modern media, including social media, present new opportunities and challenges for activist movements?

3) What were the Black Panthers' strategies for achieving their goals?

- How did they spread information among their membership?
- How did the Panther leadership inspire action and collaboration among the Party members?
- What jobs did the rank and file of the Black Panther Party do to achieve the Party's goals?
- What role did mass protests and public demonstrations play in furthering the goals of the Panthers' movement?
- How do the goals of the Black

Panther Party connect with modern demonstrations against police brutality and racial injustice?

- What tactics do modern protesters use that were not available or not utilized during the time of the Black Panthers?

4) What was the role of violence in the Black Panther Party and the movement that they inspired?

- Was the Black Panther Party a violent organization?
- How did the Panthers respond to violence in society?
- Is there a place for violent protest or for the threat of violence in a movement for social change?



- Is it possible to have a peaceful revolution?
- Can peaceful and violent movements work in tandem to achieve a common goal?

#### 5) Why did the Black Panther Party oppose capitalism?

- What did they see as the relationship between capitalism and racism in the history of the United States?
- What alternative do you think the Panthers saw to capitalism in America?
- How did the culture that they created, both in their headquarters in West Oakland, and through Fred Hampton's organizing with poor white communities in Chicago, demonstrate their vision for a new society?
- What do you think modern America would look like if the Panthers' vision had been achieved?

#### 6) Why did J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI see the Panthers as such a serious threat?

- What types of social change were the Panthers calling for, and what effect would those changes have had on the American establishment?
- Why was Fred Hampton so dangerous? What was he doing that alarmed the FBI?
- How did J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI react to the perceived threat of Hampton's organizing work?
- What effect did Hampton's assassination have on the movement in Chicago and on the national trajectory of the Black Panther Party?
- How did the police justify and explain Hampton's killing? Was justice ever served?
- Besides outright killing, what other strategies did the FBI use to undermine the Panthers and to disrupt their ability to organize for change?
- In the 1960s, the US government and the FBI undermined many social movements by inserting spies and informants among the ranks of activists.

- To what extent are these policies still practiced?
- How do you think the US government and the American establishment would react if a modern Black Panther Party emerged today?
- To what extent has our society become more transparent and just? In what ways are we still practicing the models for social control developed during the 1960s?

### Style and Message/Reading the Film for Media Literacy

1) Why do you think the filmmaker, Stanley Nelson, decided to make a film about the Black Panther Party in the year 2015?

- Is the story of the Black Panthers still relevant today?
- How does the information that you learned in this film inform your view of contemporary American society?
- What connections do you see between the Black Panthers and modern social movements?

2) The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution uses a combination of archival footage and contemporary interviews to reconstruct the story of the Panthers.

- What effect does the archival footage have on the authenticity of the story? Was it helpful for you to see images and film footage from the 1960s?
- What role do the interviews play in telling the story of the Panthers?
- Why do you think Nelson chose to use interviews instead of a voiceover narration?

3) How does the film end?

- How did you react to the film and its ending?
- What do you think is the message that the audience should take from this film?
- Were you inspired toward action, toward more learning, or to share the story of the Black Panther Party?

## POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES:

1 ) Write an essay about the history of the Black Panther Party, its goals, its achievements, its failures and its impact on modern American society. What can we learn from studying the Black Panther Party?

2) Talk with an elder about the Black Panthers. Ask your parents, your grandparents, or an elder in your community what he or she knows and remembers about the Black Panther Party. Share what you learned in the film, and ask someone from an older generation what they think about change in society? What is different in modern America and what remains the same? Share your insights from this conversation in a discussion in the classroom.

# WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM STUDYING THE BLACK PANTHERS?





## California Media Literacy Standards Addressed In This Lesson:

- **Grade 8:** Standard 1.9 Interpret and evaluate the various ways in which visual image makers (e.g., graphic artists, illustrators, news photographers) communicate information and affect impressions and opinions.
- **Grades 9 & 10:** Standard 1.14 Identify the aesthetic effects of a media presentation and evaluate the techniques used to create them (e.g., compare Shakespeare’s Henry V with Kenneth Branagh’s 1990 film version).
- **Grades 9 & 10:** Standard 1.2 Compare and contrast the ways in which media genres (e.g., televised news, news magazines, documentaries, online information) cover the same event.
- **Grades 11 & 12:** Standard 1.1 Recognize strategies used by the media to inform, persuade, entertain, and transmit culture (e.g., advertisements; perpetuation of stereotypes; use of visual representations, special effects, language); Standard 1.3 Interpret and evaluate the various ways in which events are presented and information is communicated by visual image makers (e.g., graphic artists, documentary filmmakers, illustrators, news photographers).

For more information about media literacy standards in your state, visit:

- MediaLiteracy.com: resources for advancing media education, United States Standards for media literacy education. <http://www.medialiteracy.com/standards.htm>
- Frank W Baker’s guide to State Standards Which Include Elements of Media Literacy. [http://frankwbaker.com/state\\_lit.htm](http://frankwbaker.com/state_lit.htm)

## Common Core Standards Addressed In This Lesson:

This lesson addresses the English and Language Arts standards for Reading Informational Texts grades 8-12. Additional specific standard applications are listed below:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.2 Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3 Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.3 Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

# MEDIA LITERACY RESOURCES

## SCREENING WITH MEANING

We live in a world where technology mediates a large portion of human interaction and the exchange of information. Every projected image, every word published on a page or a website, and every sound from a speaker reaches its audience through the medium, through the language of the device. The ability to parse the vast array of media messages is an essential skill for young people, particularly in a mainstream commercial culture that targets youth as a vulnerable, impressionable segment of the American marketplace. Most students already have a keen understanding of the languages different media use and the techniques they employ to inspire particular emotions or reactions, but they often lack the skill or awareness to fully deconstruct the messages they continuously receive.

Analysis of a media message—or any piece of mass media content—can best be accomplished by first identifying its principal characteristics:

- (1) Medium: the physical means by which it is contained and/or delivered
- (2) Author: the person(s) responsible for its creation and dissemination
- (3) Content: the information, emotions, values or ideas it conveys
- (4) Audience: the target audience to whom it is delivered
- (5) Purpose: the objectives of its authors and the effects of its dissemination.

Students who can readily identify these five core characteristics will be equipped to understand the incentives at work behind media messages, as well as their potential consequences. Media literacy education empowers students to become responsible consumers, active citizens and critical thinkers.

### CORE CONCEPTS OF MEDIA ANALYSIS

<b>MEDIUM</b>	<p><b>All Media Is Constructed.</b></p> <p>How is the message delivered and in what format?            What technologies are used to present the message?            What visual and auditory elements are used?            What expectations do you bring to the content, given its medium and format?</p>
<b>AUTHOR</b>	<p><b>All Media Is Constructed by Someone.</b></p> <p>Who is delivering the message?            Who originally constructed the message?            What expectations do you have of the content, given its author(s)?</p>
<b>CONTENT</b>	<p><b>All Media Is A Language.</b></p> <p>What is the subject of the media message?            What information, values, emotions or ideas are conveyed by the media content?            What tools does the author employ to engage the viewer and evoke a response?            To what extent did the content meet your expectations, given the format/author?</p>
<b>AUDIENCE</b>	<p><b>All Media Messages Reach an Audience.</b></p> <p>Who receives the message?            For whom is the message intended?            What is the public reaction to the media content and/or its message?            What is your reaction to the media content and/or its message?            How might others perceive this message differently? Why?</p>
<b>PURPOSE</b>	<p><b>All Media Messages Are Constructed for a Reason.</b></p> <p>Why was the message constructed?            Who benefits from dissemination of the message? How?            To what extent does the message achieve its purpose?            What effect does the message have on the audience it reaches, if any?</p>



## THE NON-FICTION FILM WHAT IS A DOCUMENTARY?

A documentary is a film whose goal is to capture truth, fact or reality as seen through the lens of the camera. But there are many kinds of documentaries, and not everyone's idea of truth is the same. The Scottish filmmaker John Grierson coined the term "documentary" in 1926 to describe American filmmaker Robert Flaherty's romanticized culture studies, but nonfiction filmmaking dates back to the earliest motion picture reels.

The definition of documentary expanded as filmmakers experimented with technology and the goals of nonfiction. Avant-garde documentarians, like Dziga Vertov in the 1920s, believed that the mechanical eye of the camera gave a truer image of reality than the human eye and pointed his lens at newly industrialized cities. Leni Reifenstahl's propaganda films from Nazi Germany used the nonfiction form to convey a political message, a slanted truth. The international cinema vérité or observational movements of the 1960s attempted to remove authorship from the documentary. The observational filmmaker hovered like a "fly on the wall" watching the world without commentary. Modern documentaries often seek to raise awareness about a social, environmental or political issue, guiding their audiences toward civic participation and activism.

While watching a documentary, it is important to remember the core concepts of media analysis: who made the film, for what audience and why? The nonfiction format can be deceptively subjective, as all filmmaking involves an inherent selection process: in the images that are shot, the music and narration that accompanies them and, most significantly, the way in which they are all edited together. Media literacy means always analyzing a documentary for its message and authorial intent.

## A BRIEF TIMELINE OF THE DOCUMENTARY

**1895** The Lumiere brothers developed the first motion picture film reels, capturing brief, unedited clips of life around them called "actualities" (e.g., *Train Arriving at the Station*)

**1900-1920** Travelogue or "Scenic" films became popular, showcasing exoticised images from around the globe.

**1926** John Grierson coined the term "documentary" to describe Robert Flaherty's romantic nonfiction film, *Moana*.

**1929** Dziga Vertov, with the Soviet Kino-Pravda movement, released the experimental nonfiction film, *Man With a Movie Camera*.

**1935** Leni Reifenstahl released *Triumph of the Will*, the infamous propaganda film that chronicled the 1934 Nazi Party Congress.

**1939** John Grierson collaborated with the Canadian government to form the National Film Board of Canada, with the initial goal of creating Allied propaganda in support of the war.

**1960s** The cinema vérité movement began in Europe, shortly followed by "direct cinema" in the U.S. Portable cameras and sync sound allowed filmmakers to capture intimate footage with minimal intervention.

**1968** The Argentine film, *La Hora de los Hornos (The Hour of the Furnaces)* opened the door to the activist cinema of the 1970s, which used film as a tool to counter capitalist and neo-colonial politics in Latin America.

**1988** The US Congress mandated that the US government support the creation of independent non-commercial media, and the Independent Television Service (ITVS) was founded.

**2000s** The widespread use of digital cameras and editing software made the documentary medium vastly more affordable to independent and amateur filmmakers. Video sharing sites such as YouTube and Vimeo allowed amateur filmmakers to broadcast their work.

**PRESENT DAY** The term "documentary" has come to encompass a wide range of nonfiction cinema. Contemporary filmmakers continue to push the boundaries of truth in film and to explore new avenues and applications for the medium.



# CLASSROOM GUIDE

ABOUT THE FILM  
USING THIS GUIDE  
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES  
STANDARDS ALIGNMENT  
MEDIA LITERACY RESOURCES  
SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES  
ARTICLES AND REVIEWS

## THE MAKING OF A DOCUMENTARY

### Idea, Issue, Story.

Even though they are nonfiction films, most modern documentaries structure their content around a traditional story arc, with a beginning, middle and end, as well as characters, and a conclusion, theme or thesis to impart to the audience. Documentary filmmakers begin their projects with an idea or an issue that they wish to explore more deeply. Through research and planning, they develop a comprehensive plan before they begin shooting.

### The Production Process.

To capture candid moments on film, modern documentary makers often leave the camera running, collecting far more footage than the final film requires. They may do this during interviews or in observational-style encounters with their subjects. To get increased access and an observational aesthetic, documentary makers often use handheld cameras and natural light, rather than staging a more formal filming environment.

### Post-Production and the Documentary.

Because a documentary film relies upon candid footage, a large part of the film's construction occurs in the editing room, where you work with what you've captured. A documentary editor will sift through long interviews just to find a few phrases that will summarize the film's message. To emphasize important points and build the story, some documentaries use a voiceover,

an interview or a scripted narrative that brings candid footage together into a coherent statement. An original score can work alongside the voiceover to unify the footage and shape the mood of the film. Audiences often underestimate the power of sound to generate an emotional response. Many documentaries also use charts, graphs and historical footage to add context and emphasize key points.

### Distribution.

Once a film is completed, the filmmaker needs to help it find its audience. Many documentaries are made independently on small budgets, but what's the point of all your work if no one hears your message? Some documentaries will be released in theaters around the country or get programmed on public or cable TV channels, but most documentary filmmakers will start by submitting their work to film festivals, in hopes of attracting distributors for the theater and television markets. Filmmakers may also make their films available online and use social media to reach their target audience.



## SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

### **The Film's Official Website:**

<http://theblackpanthers.com/>

.....

### **Research Materials Relating to the Black Panther Party**

Pacifica Radio Archive: The Black Panthers: <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/pacificapanthers.html>

[The Black Panther Party Research Archive: http://web.stanford.edu/group/blackpanthers/](http://web.stanford.edu/group/blackpanthers/)

Marxist Internet Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/workers/black-panthers/>

PBS Interview with Angela Davis: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/race/interviews/davis.html>

PBS: A Huey P Newton Story: [http://www.pbs.org/hueypnewton/actions/actions\\_formation.html](http://www.pbs.org/hueypnewton/actions/actions_formation.html)

.....

### **Resources for Modern Civil Rights Activism:**

Black Lives Matter: <http://blacklivesmatter.com/>

Ferguson Action Network: <http://fergusonaction.com/>

Million Hoodies for Justice: <http://www.mhoodies.org/>

ColorLines: <http://colorlines.com/>

Democracy Now: <http://www.democracynow.org/>

The Nation, "How Trayvon Martin's Death Launched a New Generation of Black Activism": <http://www.thenation.com/article/181404/how-trayvon-martins-death-launched-new-generation-black-activism>

.....

### **Talking About Race in the Classroom (for Educators):**

Teaching Tolerance: <http://www.tolerance.org/lesson/talking-about-race-and-racism>

KQED: <http://ww2.kqed.org/mindshift/2014/04/04/how-can-teachers-address-race-issues-in-class-ask-students/>

Race in the Classroom Curriculum: <http://www.framingham.k12.ma.us/equity/Guideforteachers.pdf>



## REVIEWS

### Democracy Now

Interview with the film's director, Stanley Nelson  
 APRIL 17, 2014

[http://www.democracynow.org/2015/1/30/vanguard\\_of\\_the\\_revolution\\_new\\_film](http://www.democracynow.org/2015/1/30/vanguard_of_the_revolution_new_film)

### The Hollywood Reporter

by John DeFore  
 1/23/2015

A strong if only occasionally transporting biography of a movement that terrified the establishment in its day, Stanley Nelson's *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution* speaks to many former members of the Black Panther Party about what its breed of revolutionary activism felt like at the time. Joining some other recent histories about black Americans fighting powers that are too rarely held accountable to them, the film continues a discussion whose present-day relevance is painfully, increasingly obvious. Straighter in its attitude than *The Black Power Mixtape* and covering much more ground than *Free Angela & All Political Prisoners*, it does so in a way that will be an easy sell on public TV, where it's likely to find most of its initial audience before a long and useful life on video.

Beginning in the group's birthplace of Oakland, California, the doc points out how the persecution of the civil rights era had a different flavor in coastal cities than in the South. Here, we're told, thuggish police "might not have called you n—r, but they treated you the same." We're introduced to the young Huey P. Newton, who realized that it was legal to carry loaded guns in

public and understood that doing so in the vicinity of police interacting with Oakland's black population would draw more attention to racial justice issues than a million printed fliers. He and Bobby Seale organized the party, which began with a focus on militancy but soon launched major charitable programs, including a famous free-breakfast effort that fed children 20,000 meals a week.

Drama was never in short supply with the Panthers, and Newton's arrest early in their existence provided a rallying cry that was (like their fondness for calling police "pigs") taken up by white college students and other left-leaning groups. While he shows the power of the "Free Huey" slogan, Nelson isn't eager to investigate it; he tells us almost nothing about the incident that led to Newton's imprisonment (he was accused of killing a policeman), nor does he give us any way of guessing whether it was just or unjust.

The omission of such significant details is puzzling given that Nelson soon enough proves willing to show the group's leaders in an unfavorable light. We watch in some detail as their intellectual star, Eldridge Cleaver, goes off the deep end following an armed standoff, fleeing to Algeria and eventually fracturing the party. And near the end, we briefly hear of Newton's descent into drugs and erratic, criminal behavior. It's tempting to conclude that the film is willing to be frank about the problems party figures caused themselves and each other, but the doc wants few shades of gray when it comes to antagonism between Panthers and the police. The film's most involving bit of storytelling comes when the villainy of law enforcement is in no doubt. After detailing J. Edgar Hoover's fervor to destroy the group with COINTELPRO and dirty tricks, it introduces the tremendously charismatic Fred Hampton, who in 1969

# CLASSROOM GUIDE

ABOUT THE FILM  
USING THIS GUIDE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

MEDIA LITERACY RESOURCES

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

ARTICLES AND REVIEWS



seemed poised to emerge as the kind of “black messiah” Hoover feared. Just as he was starting to build inspiring alliances between Panthers and activists in Latino and poor white communities, Hampton was killed in an FBI-engineered police raid that begs to be called a political assassination.

Straight history is not the whole point here, as Nelson enthusiastically conjures a sense of what it felt like to be a Panther and to be a young black person inspired by them. Alongside historians, we hear from many surviving party members, including Jamal Joseph, Kathleen Cleaver, and William Calhoun. (The absence of Seale, the most famous surviving Panther, is not explained.) Adding a bounty of excellent archival photographs and some good political soul on the soundtrack, the movie makes unnecessary one member’s happy recollection that “we had a swagger.”