



THE ORIGINS AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE NEW PANTHER VANGUARD MOVEMENT

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On **October 15, 1994**, a newly organized "panther-like" group emerged from the inner-city neighborhoods of South-Central Los Angeles. But it had not simply "emerged." It was the result of months of discussion, and analysis, of the "social conditions," the "history" of the original Black Panther Party; these discussions were also inspired by the shared recognition that what was needed was an explicitly "political" organization, one that could both embody, and promote, the spirit of "uncompromising revolutionary theory and action" that had distinguished the original BPP from all other "Black" organizations at the time of its birth. Out of these informal discussions, a compromise was reached and this new "panther-like organization" as the **NEW AFRICAN AMERICAN VANGUARD MOVEMENT [NAAVM]**. The NAAVM emerged, also, as a response to, and as a direct result of the volatile social conditions, and the organizing opportunities, exposed in the 1992 rebellion.

The logo of the NAAVM, designed by long-time Panther Boko Abar [Charles Freeman] is a fierce looking black panther bursting out of the new world order, symbolized by the image of a globe. From its beginnings, the NAAVM had both a "local presence" and an "international perspective." In fact, the leading members of the NAAVM clearly recognized that "the Movement" had to be "rebuilt" both locally and globally. That was one of the reasons why the organization included "movement" in its name.

Although NAAVM organizers believed that it was critically important that a "panther-like" organization be created, no one wanted to perpetuate the obvious "internal contradictions" that had afflicted the original Black Panther Party (BPP); no one wanted to "revive" the original, but defunct, BPP. That's why a significant focus of the discussions preceding the actual formation of the NAAVM was focused on developing a "shared understanding" of the "theory and practice" of the BPP, and a critical analysis of its Ten Point Platform and Program, its Code of Conduct, and most importantly a serious study of, and learning as much as possible from, the original BPP's mistakes and successes.

In mid-June 1994, hundreds of blue and black posters were printed and then posted throughout South Central Los Angeles; these posters depicted an "enraged black panther" bursting out of the new world order, which was also symbolized by a globe, announcing: *The New African American Vanguard Movement - Coming to your Neighborhood Soon!*

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Over five hundred people attended the Vision Theater in the Leimert Park area in Los Angeles. The theme of this founding event was *"Remembering the Black Panther Party: Serving the People Body and Soul."* The event featured a series of educational speakers, cultural and entertainment



activities, networking with other community-based organizations and agencies, and was highlighted by the distribution of nearly a thousand bags of free groceries. Inspired and motivated in large part by the unforgotten experiences as members of the BPP, and also in part by a recognition of the critical importance of inspiring, educating, and organizing just *ordinary* brothers and sisters from the streets, the NAAVM was officially launched during its

First Annual Community Forum-Festival.

From its inception, NAAVM organizers consciously targeted gang members and potential members of the Crips and the Bloods for membership in its defense Ministry. In its formative period, a key tactical objective of the NAAVM was also supporting and promoting community efforts to secure "gang truces." The NAAVM was quite successful during its formative period in attracting younger, former, gang members; later bitter disagreements and internal struggle inevitably arose over the issues of "relaxed" discipline and how best to meet the challenge of providing a proper context for the "political orientation" of these youth. In spite of these internal struggles, the NAAVM did establish its presence in the Crip and Blood infested neighborhoods of south central LA.



As might be expected, since its inception, the NAAVM has gone through a number of dramatic changes in organizational form, including a major change in its official name, and its programmatic focus. In 1996, the NAAVM launched its first National Reparations Campaign, and in 2000 reformulated and re-designed its National Reparations Campaign" as an *Intercommunal Reparations Campaign*.

Our booklet, A Case for An Intercommunal Reparations Campaign is now in its third revised printing. In this small booklet we outlined our evolving perspective on what we consider to be a "revolutionary demand" for "Intercommunal Reparations." And ever since then we have continued to advocate and educate, based on our evolving understanding of the principals of "Intercommunalism," the critical necessity of directly linking the struggle of African Americans for reparations to the struggles of reparations for Africans throughout the African Diaspora, including the allied struggle for reparations of the indigenous populations particularly here in the Americas.

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Significantly, the revised Ten Point Platform and Program of the NAAVM continued the basic demands of the original BPP, but also equally significant, the Program included new, more clearly articulated, demands relating to the present day reality of African American people: the strategic demand for "Peace, Justice, and Reparations," the demand for the release of all political prisoners, a demand for "sentencing review" of all prisoners convicted of non-violent drug offenses, and a demand for fundamental reform of the criminal "injustice" system and the "miseducational" system; these reasonable demands indict institutions which clearly have had, and continue to have, an entirely negative impact on the daily lives of African American youth and other youth of color. The NAAVM Program also expressed the community's desire to seek and achieve viable, non-criminal, solutions to the "drug abuse problem."



On April 19, 1997, the NAAVM entered a new phase in its development when members of the NAAVM and the New Black Panther Party (NBPP) participated in a "Black Panther Unit Summit" at the Vanguard's Los Angeles-based International Panther Headquarters, so as to continue discussions relating to the formation of a "national Panther Movement structure" that had been agreed to nearly a year earlier in Houston, Texas. The theme of this "unity summit"



was "resolving contradictions." During the course of this first of three such "summits" both former and "new" Panthers also discussed common program objectives, political perspectives, and revisited the numerous contradictions that had plagued the original Oakland-based BPP. Of particular importance was the discussion and dialogue that focused on the mistakes made by the BPP leadership in resolving contradictions, dealing with differences in tactics, philosophy, and ideology among its leadership and membership.

During the "first unity summit" consensus was reached on a revised Ten Point Platform and a national Code of Conduct which would assist in giving form and direction to a new "loosely confederated" national entity that would be called the New Panther Vanguard Movement (NPVM). The major and immediate objective of the NPVM was to obtain the support and participation of each of the newly emerging "panther-like groups" and individual "panther activists" around the country, who had patterned themselves after, and were presumably carrying on in the "revolutionary tradition" of, the original BPP.



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This first "unity summit," composed of representatives of the NAAVM and the New Black Panther Party (NBPP), agreed to convene a follow-up meeting in Milwaukee in order to meet with the founder and members of the Black Panther Militia. This planned meeting never materialized, due to an apparent lack of interest by the Black Panther Militia. However, ongoing out-reach efforts continued to be made to any "panthers" [former or present] functioning throughout the United States, and particularly in the Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York areas. The third "unity summit" took place in New York in 1998, sponsored by the Black Panther Collective (BPC). The former National Chairman of the NBPP, Khalid Muhammad [now deceased], stopped by and participated in a lively, and sometimes heated, dialogue about the political philosophy of the original BPP, and the prospects of continuing to build a national network of "panther-like" groups. Unfortunately, Khalid did not want to pursue a serious discussion about the



concerns of then renamed NPVM relating to the different styles of organizing between the NBPP and the NPVM. The most productive outcome of the "unity summit" in New York were the joint commitments of the BPC and the NPVM to continue seeking ways to work together, including the production and distribution of the Black Panther Newspaper.

Informal discussions continued between the BPC and the NPVM



regarding the organization of a "national operational network" of "panther-like groups," with a common "code of conduct" and "platform and program" [though similar to the original platform it was in fact a significant revision of the revised Platform and Program and Code of Conduct of the original BPP]. Unfortunately, nearly six months after the New York Summit, the BPC developed internal contradictions, its leading members left the group, and as a result the continued organizing of the "Unity Summits" came to an end, with the various "panther-like" organizations working and organizing independently.



Over the past 6 years, the ideology of the NPVM has changed fundamentally, by and through its engagement, support and participation, in various struggles and movements of the descendants of African Slaves and other "Indigenous peoples" living in America. Through significantly different organizationally, than when it first emerged, the NPVM has built a local base of support, established a national presence, and acquired a truly global perspective. Also, the NPVM has taken a leading role in defining and organizing the African-American Reparations Movement. The NPVM has also publicized and promoted, and continues to publicize and promote, an international recognition of its unique way of "looking at the world."

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And today, as yesterday, the majority of African-American youth leave high school either with less than a "seventh" grade education or with no graduation certificate. There is an absence of political efforts to make education relevant, culturally or historically speaking. Public education has become a liability, and not an asset, to poor people of color. Unemployment levels among young Black men, particularly between the ages of 18-35, has been devastating and should be seen and acted upon as "criminal" neglect" by the Government.

In this Age of Technology, the unskilled labor of Black

men (the source of much profits for the Capitalist system in the past) is no longer needed by the White Corporate Power Structure [which, despite a few "almost-Black" faces, has basically gone unchanged since the Sixties]. As a result, the "criminal injustice system" continues to imprison a disproportionate number of young African-Americans and other persons of color, principally Mexicans, South and Central Americans. Infant mortality rates among young Black women exceed that of some underdeveloped Third World countries.

"Man-made" diseases, like AIDS, are decimating the ranks of gay men [many of whom are Black] and other heterosexual people of color at alarming rates [not only here in the USA but also in Africa]. Quality health care is



2nd Annual Festival

all but none existent for poor people of color throughout the world.

The ranks of the homeless are overwhelmingly, though not exclusively, Black men and women. Our increasingly "integrated" communities of "color," lack the "capital" for economic development; as a result, crime runs rampant, as those who are unemployed and unemployable succumb to involvement in petty [and oftentimes very serious] crimes against persons and property.



Today's police institution has grown to gigantic proportions, as the criminal "Capitalistic culture" has infected the entire society. Despite the hiring of Black Chiefs of Police, and literally thousands of black and Mexican, and other rank and file police officers of color, within local police

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departments over the past ten (10) years, the "police institution" itself continues to be a bastion of white supremacy and anti-black animus, which is routinely experienced even by these "Black" police officers. Thus, it is clear that the police institution has not fundamentally changed since the 60's and



70's, and is still necessary that it be transformed into an institution that is based in and run by the communities it is supposed to protect and serve.

The NPVM is prepared to make all necessary demands; its carefully selected Leadership/ member- ship share a commitment to re-establishing a "vanguard" African-American Liberation Movement that will be able first to demand, and then achieve, a basic political program that can address the complex, global, socio-economic realities of this New Millennium, and the corresponding

political needs and aspirations of the majority of Africans and other poor people of color.

The NPVM dedicates its existence to continuing in the revolutionary spirit of the Black Panther Party. We believe that Malcolm X certainly embodied that spirit and put forth a plan for total liberation of African-Americans led by the Organization of African-American Unity. The BPP, however, was the first successfully organized attempt to build a "mass base" for a "liberation movement" led by Black people. This process must, and will, continue.

The "spirit of the Panther Party" and the "vision of Malcolm X" truly lives on in the hearts and minds of the members of the NPVM. Panther-like slogans and Malcolm's teachings are heard today in student protest rallies, anti-war rallies, community demonstrations for peace and justice, and labor pickets all across the country - from Alabama to Wisconsin, from California to New York, and from oppressed communities around the globe.

The NPVM is firmly committed to the principle that no one but we ourselves can save us from the contradictions and adverse conditions we find ourselves in. If you too believe that the "reparations movement"* is the "cutting edge issue of our times," as we do, and that a resurgence of "revolutionary activism" and "revolutionary unity" is critically needed in our communities, then we urge you to review our revised Ten Point Platform and Program, and urge your active, and material, support and participation in organizing a truly "new revolutionary Panther movement."

*For more information visit our web page at: *<http://globalpanther.com>
or give us a call at (323) 296-4383*