

POLYNESIAN BLACK PANTHERS

Sina Brown-Davis



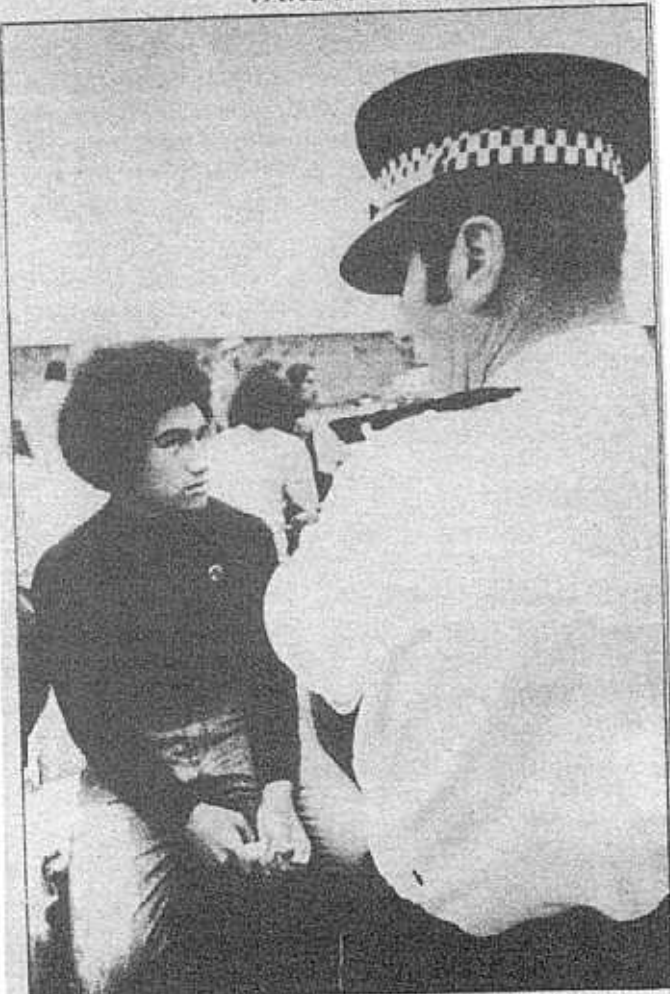
While Nga Tamatoa was the radical group for young Maori in the '70s, the Polynesian Panthers was the outlet for young Pacific Island agitators.

Originally formed in Auckland in June 1971 as the Polynesian Panther Movement, the organisation was a fusion of young Pacific Island student radicals and their gang member cousins.

student radicals and their gang member cousins.

LOCALISED RACISM

— TAKE IT SLOW BROTHER!



A talk given by Wayne Toleafou-Peseta Minister of Information of the Polynesian Panther Movement.

Director of Pacific Island Studies at Auckland University, Dr Melanie Anae, quoted this passage from Panther material, in a 2004 "Anew" article to highlight the group's outlook.

"The revolution we openly rap about is one of total change. The revolution is one to liberate us from racism, oppression and capitalism. We see many of our problems of oppression and racism are tools of this society's outlook based on capitalism; hence for total change one must change society altogether."

Their Marxism was like that of their US based black Panther heroes: Maoist oriented. The Panthers also reached out to variety of radical allies.

The PPM (known the Polynesian Panther Party, after November 1972) allied with the Maori radicals

of Nga Tamatoa and the Maoists of Roger Fowler's Peoples Union and the NZ Race Relation's Council, HART and the Communist Party.

They also mixed with the Trotskyists from the Socialist Action League and with members of the Pro-Soviet, Socialist Unity Party.

The Panthers worked closely with the Marxist controlled Citizen's Association for Racial Equality and the Auckland Committee on Racial discrimination (ACORD).

In July 1973, PPP "Minister of Culture" Ama Kaunini attended a Maoist "People's Forum" in Singapore and was selected to tour China with several Maori members of the Communist Party of NZ.

In July/August 1974, PPP member Norman Tuiasau attended the 10th International Youth Festival in East Berlin. The conference was convened by the Soviet front, World Federation of Democratic Youth and the trip was organised by the Socialist Unity Party.

Tuiasau heard US Communist Party leader, Angela Davis, speak in East Berlin and traveled on to Moscow where he saw Lenin's tomb.

The Panthers delegated a young Melanie Anae to make contact with the real Black Panthers, during a trip to Los Angeles to stay with relatives. In September 1974 an article on the PPP was published in "Black Panther" magazine in the USA.

In mid 1972, PPP leader Will 'Ilotahia toured Australia where he met Aboriginal Black Power groups. On his return he announced plans for "solidarity and co-operation" between the PPP, Aboriginal groups and black power supporters in Papua-New Guinea.

At their peak, the Panthers had a busy HQ in Ponsonby, Auckland, several branches across the city, a shortlived branch in Dunedin and supporters in other centres.



The PPP was very active for several years. They ran dances for youth, agitated for traffic lights at unsafe pedestrian crossings, ran food banks, organised prison visits and ran candidates for local high school boards.

More politically, in 1972, the PPP worked with Nga Tamatoa, the Stormtrooper and Headhunter gangs to form a "loose Polynesian Front"

In January 1974 the PPP participated in a meeting "amongst all Maori and Polynesian progressive organisations to form a united front".



Polynesian Panthers Ponsonby Auckland 1970

Understandably the PPP focussed on exposing racism, particularly by the police. In 1974, the PPP, jointly with Nga Tamatoa, CARE, ACORD and the Peoples Union organised the Police Investigation Group, which mounted "P.I.G. patrols" to monitor police dealings with Polynesian youth.

The PPP's military wing also assisted in the Party's several campaigns against rack renters who allegedly preyed on the Polynesian communities at the time.

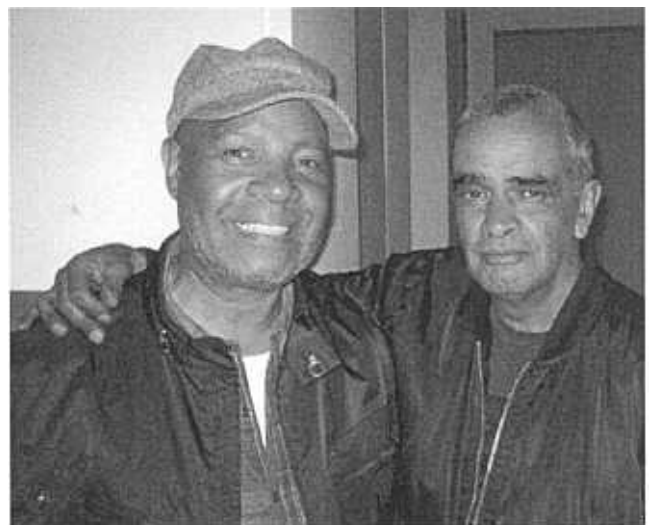
The PPP was active until the late '70s and never officially disbanded. Several cadres were arrested at Bastion Point in 1978 and some even played a role in the "Patu" squad during the 1981 Springbok Tour.



Patu squad from the 1981 Springbok tour

The legacy of the Panthers lives on in Aotearoa today. Younger generations have benefited from the struggle that our elders engaged in during the 60's 70's & 80's. Still however there is much to do and still much oppression felt by our brothers and sisters in the Pacific and world-wide. Status in white society and the material comfort of some of us does not negate the fact that the majority of Pacific peoples live lives of racism & poverty. The best legacy we can leave for the Polynesian Panthers is to rekindle the struggle and fight against oppression in our communities & our islands.

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Emory Douglas & Gary Foley (long time Aboriginal Activist)

POLYNESIAN PANTHER PARTY 7-POINT PLATFORM SERVES THE PEOPLE

(Auckland, New Zealand) - The Polynesian Panther Party (PPP) is a political grassroots organization working in New Zealand to organize and serve the impoverished Polynesian community. The PPP was organized in 1970 to fight against the social conditions which oppress the large population of Polynesians in this White-ruled country off the coast of Australia. (See THE BLACK PANTHER, March 30, 1974.)

Modeled after the Black Panther Party in the U.S., the PPP sponsors several free programs to serve the Polynesian community and has drawn up a Platform which reflects the basic human needs and desires of the Polynesian people.

The Polynesian Panther Party sponsors Free Community Education Centers, a Free Legal Aid Program, a Free Prisoners Aid Program, an Interpreters Program, a Tenants Aid Brigade, a Police Investigation Group and a Group Aid Program. It maintains an office/information center and organizes community workers to aid people in many ways.

Below is the January, 1974, Platform and Program of the Polynesian Panther Party, re-

Free educational aid and tutoring are one of the free programs operated by the Polynesian Panther Party. Here a teacher and student go over a homework assignment.



ceived recently by THE BLACK PANTHER. Readers will notice that the P.P.P. has arranged its Platform and Program so that the first letters in each paragraph spell out the word P-A-N-T-H-E-R.

PLATFORM

Polynesian Panther Party (PPP) exists because we experience and suffer under the racism and exploitation of this society, both in its institutions and in its control over the Polynesian people. We will exist until the Polynesian people and other oppressed peoples have the power to control and determine their own destiny. We will exist until there is an end to the robbery by the capitalist, of the Polynesian people's wealth, labour, business and employment. We DEMAND full employment and full community control over our wealth, labour and business.

As Polynesian liberation fighters we work for the end to the racism, exploitation, injustice and oppression that our people suffer

in this society. As liberation fighters, we also recognize the struggles of other people in this world. The PPP believes in INTERCOMMUNALISM and stands in Intercommunal Solidarity with all the other liberation fighters. We know that we cannot ignore the struggle of other oppressed people because the local struggle is only a part of the larger world struggle against racism, exploitation, injustice and oppression. However the local struggle comes first in our work towards liberation.

No longer must the N.Z. power structure try to divide and rule the Polynesian people. The PPP believes in Polynesian unity. On this basis of unity we believe that the indigenous people of N.Z. (the Maori people of Polynesia) should be given the right to control the distribution of their land, put an end to the legislative and nonlegislative robbery of their land. We also point out that N.Z. is a Polynesian country in a

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POLYNESIAN PANTHER PARTY PLATFORM

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Polynesian area, therefore, there should be no racist immigration laws to prevent non-Maori Polynesians from migrating to this land. Only we, the Polynesians, should enforce the immigration quota because this is our area and we want control of this area.

The inequality, injustice and unfairness of the racist judicial and penal systems has taken the lives of many of our people. The courts have convicted and imprisoned many of our people by unjustified and unfair laws and trials. We DEMAND an end to unjust and unfair trials and imprisonment of Polynesian people. Only when they are tried by their own people and with laws that serve a multi-racial society will justice prevail in these systems. We DEMAND an end to all police harassment and victimization of Polynesian people. Because this society does not serve the Polynesian people,

many of the Polynesian prisoners in today's jails are victims of this injustice. Therefore they are political prisoners. We DEMAND freedom for all Polynesian political prisoners.

Housing for the Polynesian people and other oppressed people must be made fit for the shelter of all human beings. The PPP wants an end to the exploitation of Polynesian families by the racist landlords, racketeers and land speculators. We feel that the only interest they have are their own capitalistic gains and they do not show any concern for the true welfare of the people.

Education as it exists at the present moment truly shows the real nature of this racist society. We want to have an education that teaches us our own history, culture and our distinct role in present day society. We believe in an educational system that will give the people a knowledge of

self. We believe that the educational system must be changed to serve a multi-racial society and that the community should control its function and existence.

Reconstruction and revolutionizing of all aspects of this society is needed so that all people can live together with equality and have freedom, justice and peace. We want an end to all forms of RACISM whether it be by individuals or in institutions. We want the community to control its own affairs and destiny, its welfare, the police force, the schools, concerned institutions and the redistribution of the country's wealth. This society must be changed to serve a multi-racial population. We want an end to the racist laws that are mono-cultural in nature, and the institutions that are dominated by racial or mono-cultural values. The PPP wants and will work, by any means necessary, for the betterment of the people. Only when the *People* have the power to control this society will we achieve a better deal. □