

*Black Panthers Serving Youngsters a Diet of Food and Politics*

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SAN FRANCISCO, June 14 —It is early morning and the kids come racing up the hill through the chilly mist to a shabby little whitewashed church that overlooks the Hunters Point slum.

The kids are second, third and fourth graders. They are young and black and they come dashing up the hill with their coats open, yelling and grabbing and pushing at each other.

At the back door of the church, sitting at a scarred wooden desk, Richard O'Neal, a 20-year-old member of the Black Panther party waits for the kids.

"Free Huey," the first youngster to reach the door shouts. The others follow. "Free Huey. Free Huey. Free Huey."

O'Neal grins and raises a clenched fist. "Right on, little brothers and sisters," he says. "Right on."

The youngsters rattle off their names and addresses. O'Neal jots them down on forms spread out on the desk. As soon as he can get the information, the children hustle past him and into two small rooms off to the side of the church for eggs, pancakes, grits, sausage, bacon, toast, coffee, milk and sometimes juice.

**Children Eat for Nothing**

The children were there for a free breakfast from the black militant organization, and they were being well fed —with both food and politics.

The breakfast program reaches far beyond this bay area into at least six California cities and several others across the country.

"Right now," Bobby Seale, chairman and co-founder of the Black Panthers, said this week, "we are feeding over 1,000 kids every day right here in the bay area." He said the national program feeds 10,000 youngsters daily in cities including New York, Chicago, Detroit, Boston, Los Angeles and Kansas City.

In the bay area the Panthers have their program operating in churches and halls in both the Fillmore and Hunters Point ghettos. Other programs are operating in Oakland and Berkeley.

At rallies, the Panthers, who used to hustle donations that they said were needed "for bail money," now ask contributions "to help feed hungry children."

In addition to what they can collect at the rallies and demonstrations, the Panthers also make the rounds of business establishments in the area. Their demand that merchants doing business in the black community contribute is firm.

One large supermarket, Safeway, is now being subjected to a Panther-led boycott because, according to Seale, it refused to contribute \$100 a week to the breakfast program.

While the Panthers say that the program was initiated "to feed hungry children," they make no effort to mask its political side.

Most of the church basements and halls where the breakfasts are served have huge posters and pictures of Black Panther leaders and heroes of the black national-



A Black Panther serving breakfast to youngsters at one of the centers in San Francisco. Stephen Shames for The New York Times

ist movement pasted on the walls.

The "Free Huey" shouts are almost constant. "Free Huey" is a Panther slogan that refers to Huey P. Newton, one of the founders of the organization and its minister of defense who was jailed last year after a manslaughter conviction arising from the fatal shooting of an Oakland policeman.

The shouts for Newton's freedom, though, are not the only slogans the kids have picked up during the breakfast meetings.

In St. Augustine's Episcopal Church in Oakland, Marsha Turner, a young Panther leader, led the youngsters in a song that had these lyrics:

"There's a pig upon the hill, if you don't shoot em' the Panthers will." And: "They got Huey in the jail, they won't let 'em out on bail."

Marsha, a pretty, 16-year-old, yelled the lyrics and after each verse, as in the old Army march song, she would ask the kids to "sound off" and they would respond with the familiar shout of "Free Huey."

At another point during

the breakfast at St. Augustine's, the kids joined in repeating after a husky-throated Panther:

"I am a revolutionary; I love Huey P. Newton; I love Eldridge Cleaver; I love Bobby Seale, I love being a revolutionary; I feel good; off the pigs; power to the people."

In the basement of the huge Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church at Fillmore and Fell Streets in San Francisco, articles from the newspaper published by the Panthers were read and explained to the youngsters.

**Talks Are a Highlight**

In a meeting hall a few blocks from Candlestick Park, the baseball stadium of the San Francisco Giants, the kids took turns explaining what they felt the words political prisoner meant.

And at the Ridge Point Methodist Church, the little white church at 181 Hilltop Road in the Hunters Point section of San Francisco, the youngsters were given copies of the Black Panther paper to take home.

The political "talk" sessions that are part of every

breakfast are a highlight for the kids.

"Off the pigs," they shout now and their clenched tiny fists shoot into the air. The term "pigs" is one that the Panthers have popularized among radicals when referring to the police.

Mostly, the breakfasts are held in the churches — some in white churches but mostly in the black area. Most of the kids who come for breakfast are black but there are a few whites. Some whites also show up each morning to help prepare the breakfasts but mostly, it is the Panthers themselves who do the cooking, the serving and afterward the dishes.

William Hill, a dark, smooth-faced 18-year-old, stood in the cramped little kitchen in the Ridge Point Methodist Church in Hunters Point and kept busy scrambling eggs in a huge, black skillet. Like many of the Panthers preparing the breakfast, he wore his identifying black leather jacket and slimcut black trousers.

"Everybody gets their chance to cook," he explained. "And if they don't know how, they learn."

Each morning now, Hill and

a number of other Panthers involved in the program begin their day at 5 A.M. "You have to get up that early," he explained. "You have to be here by 6. We are ready to start serving by 7 or 7:15. You know we feed about 50 or 60 a day up here."

After the breakfasts are over and the kids have gone off to school, the Panthers do the cleaning up.

"Then we go out with leaflets or selling the papers or trying to get donations or something," the Hill youth explained.

**The Panthers Clean Up**

"You'll find that very few Panthers have time for a job," he continued. "The people take care of us. As long as we are on the job, we don't have to worry about that."

For the Panthers, the breakfast program is a new venture but those involved do not consider it unusual.

"We see that our children are hungry," Marsha Turner explained, "so we feed them. We know that they are hungry because when we were kids we were hungry. We know what it means to have nothing but cold cornbread and maple syrup in the morning."

Aside from the refusal of contributions that prompted the Safeway boycott, the program has experienced other difficulties.

One has been the reluctance of certain Negro churches to allow the Panthers to use their facilities. Some parents have also insisted that their children have breakfast at home.

When black churches turned the Panthers down, they went to white churches. When contributions were refused, they boycotted or threatened such action. And as for criticism that the program exploits the kids as it feeds them, the Panthers ignore it.

"Say anything you want," one observer said, "but there is one unmistakable fact: Black Panthers are feeding more kids every day than anyone else in the whole state of California. Now think about that."