

JUDAS AND THE BLACK MESSIAH FILM RESOURCE GUIDE

CHAIRMAN FRED HAMPTON

Judas and the Black Messiah is inspired by the true story of Chairman Fred Hampton, his work as Chairman of the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party, and his assassination by the FBI. In textbooks and across pop culture, the Black Panther Party has historically been reduced to a violent, extremist organization - when in fact, that narrative couldn't be further from the truth.

In order to move racial equity forward, it's important to understand our past and dispel misinformation about our history. We hope you'll check out the information below to learn more about Chairman Fred Hampton, the Black Panther Party, and then head back to our [site](#) to further understand their connections to the modern day movement for Black liberation.

Even from a young age, Chairman Fred Hampton had the ability to mobilize his community against injustice. As a teen, he led the NAACP Youth Council, successfully organizing for better academic services and recreational facilities for the Black youth of Maywood, Illinois.¹

In 1968, when he was just 20 years old, Chairman Fred Hampton assumed the role of Chairman of the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party, a grassroots political organization which advocated for the self-determination and liberation of Black communities around the world.

Recognizing the power of multicultural unity for a common cause, Chairman Fred Hampton created The Rainbow Coalition of Revolutionary Solidarity (Rainbow Coalition for short), joining forces with the Puerto Rican-led Young Lords and the white-led organization Young Patriots to fight for equality and political empowerment. Under his leadership, the Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party grew to be the largest in the country. By 1969, the FBI saw Chairman Fred Hampton as such a threat to the status quo that it appointed FBI informant William O'Neal to infiltrate the Black Panther Party and help destroy them.² In December of that year, Chairman Fred Hampton was murdered by the Chicago Police and FBI.



Photo: Warner Bros.

**ANYWHERE THERE'S PEOPLE,
THERE'S POWER.**

Though Chairman Fred Hampton's life was cut short, his impact has continued to reverberate through organizers around the world who are continuing the fight for equality and justice.

¹[Save the Hampton House](#)

²[50 Years After His Death, Fred Hampton's Legacy Looms Large in Chicago](#), NPR, Dec 2019

THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIETY

The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP) is a grassroots political organization founded by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale in 1966 in Oakland, CA. Driven largely by young Black activists, particularly young Black women, the Panthers advocated for the self-determination and liberation of Black communities around the world.

Despite being vilified as a violent, divisive movement and targeted by both the Chicago Police Department and the FBI, Chairman Hampton and the Panthers were resilient, strategic activists that pioneered, promoted and popularized multiracial organizing to advocate for basic human rights - like education, health care, food, land, housing, financial freedom, and the end of police brutality.

The government saw the Black Panthers as a militant threat to the status quo and pushed that narrative to a frightened public in a time of growing civil unrest. But this perception of the Panthers was not reality. In Black and marginalized communities across America, they were providing more than 60 services through their Survival Programs, directly addressing the needs of the Black community that were being systematically ignored.

THE FREE BREAKFAST PROGRAM

Most famously, at the height of their Free Breakfast Program, they were serving full meals to 20,000 school-aged children in 19 cities across the country every day³ and school officials immediately noticed an improvement in concentration in those kids who were now having breakfast before school.⁴

Police departments responded to the unprecedented success of the Free Breakfast Program by raiding the Panthers' food pantries and headquarters. In an internal FBI memo, Director J. Edgar Hoover wrote; "The [Program] represents the best and most influential activity going for the BPP and, as such, is potentially the greatest threat to efforts by authorities to neutralize the BPP and destroy what it stands for."

The US government acknowledged the power of the BPP's Free Breakfast Program and used it as one of the reasons to destroy them. By 1970, only 16% of the country perceived the Panthers as doing good work for disadvantaged youth⁵ and just five years later in 1975, the US government co-opted the program and started offering free breakfast in public schools.⁶



³ [The Black Panthers: Revolutionaries, Free Breakfast Pioneers](#), National Geographic, Nov 2015

⁴ [How the Black Panthers' Breakfast Program Both Inspired and Threatened the Government](#), History, Feb 2018

⁵ [Fascination and Fear: Covering the Black Panthers](#), New York Times, Oct 2016

⁶ [One of the Biggest, Baddest Things we Did: Black Panthers' Free Breakfast 50 Years On](#), The Guardian, Oct 2019

THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIETY (CONT.)



Photo: Warner Bros.

While the Breakfast Program is the most famous of the Party's Survival Programs, others included providing legal services, medical clinics, research into sickle cell anemia and a monthly bus service to prisons to visit incarcerated loved ones.

All of these Survival Programs were based on the **TEN POINT PROGRAM**, which was the foundational ethos of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense:

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.
2. We want full employment for our people.
3. We want an end to the robbery by the capitalists of our Black and oppressed communities.
4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.
5. We want an education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in present day society.
6. We want all Black men to be exempt from military service.
7. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of Black people.
8. We want freedom for all Black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.
9. We want all Black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their Black Communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.
10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace.

COINTELPRO / GOVERNMENT VIOLENCE AGAINST BLACK LIBERATORS

Anti-Black racism has been institutionalized within the United States and global institutions for centuries, and the sustained effort to disrupt the movement for Black liberation and maintain the status quo is a key tenet of American history.

According to FBI documents, one of the purposes of their **Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO)** was to “expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize the activities of the Black nationalists”. The program surveilled Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Ella Baker, Malcom X and groups like the NAACP, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Black Panthers, who were labeled as “the greatest threat to internal security of the country” by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover.⁷

Some of the FBI’s tactics included spying, wiretapping phones, making criminal charges on flimsy evidence, spreading rumors and even assassinating prominent individuals, like Black Panther Chairman Fred Hampton⁸. Of the 295 documented actions taken by COINTELPRO to disrupt Black groups, almost 80% of them were directed against the Black Panther Party.⁹

While we may think this type of surveillance is a thing of the past, we know - thanks to a 2017 leak - that the FBI Counterintelligence division created an unfounded domestic terrorism category called Black Identity Extremism. In 2018 and 2019, they

conducted nationwide assessment of these so-called ‘Black identity extremists,’ prioritizing these cases over investigations of far more prevalent violence from white supremacists and far-right militants over that same period. The FBI has admitted to using its most advanced surveillance aircraft to monitor BLM protests as recently as 2020¹⁰, even though most of the violence that falls within its jurisdiction was perpetuated by police, not protesters.¹¹

The reason for attacks, surveillance and secrecy is because these activists who are fighting for Black liberation threaten a system that is built on the power of one race over another. Just as with Chairman Hampton, there is no greater threat than a coalition of people organizing together to upend a system that is built on oppression.

From the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s to the Black Lives Matter movement today, those in power have sought to otherize, delegitimize and systematically undermine Black people organizing for their basic rights.¹²

Black and Brown organizers who seek to hold white supremacist violence accountable continue to be criminalized, exiled and murdered for the threat they pose to the system, and, alongside their families and communities, they continue to pay the ultimate sacrifice.



⁷ [The Police Raid that Killed Two Panthers, Shook Chicago and Changed the Nation](#), The Washington Post, Dec 2019

⁸ [The Foundations of Black Power](#), NMAAHC

⁹ [A Huey Newton Story](#), PBS

¹⁰ [The FBI Used Its Most Advanced Spy Plane to Watch Black Lives Matter Protests](#), BuzzFeed News, June 2020

¹¹ [The FBI Targets a New Generation of Black Activists](#), Brennan Center, June 2020

¹² [COINTELPRO 2020: How the FBI Continues to Disrupt the Fight for Racial Justice](#), March 2020