

The Black Power Movement



What was the Black Power Movement?

The Black Power Movement was a movement that flourished during the 1960s and '70s. It emphasized black self-reliance and self-determination. Participants in the movement believed that African Americans should secure their human rights by creating political and cultural organizations that served their interests. During this era, there was a rise in the demand for black history courses, a greater embrace of African culture, and a spread of raw artistic expression to include the creation of Hip Hop.



History of the Black Power Movement



Though the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum with the implementation of the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act, by 1966, a growing number of young black men and women began to feel that the strategy of the movement didn't go far enough. They believed that protesting segregation alone didn't adequately address the overarching feeling of powerlessness that many Black Americans experienced as a result of generations of systemic racism.

Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association

Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association are critically important to the genesis of the Black Power Movement. The UNIA was the largest mass movement in Black History and Marcus Garvey coined the phrase and idea that “Black is Beautiful”. Garvey’s movement was rooted in the liberation of black minds from the psychological bondage of racial inferiority.

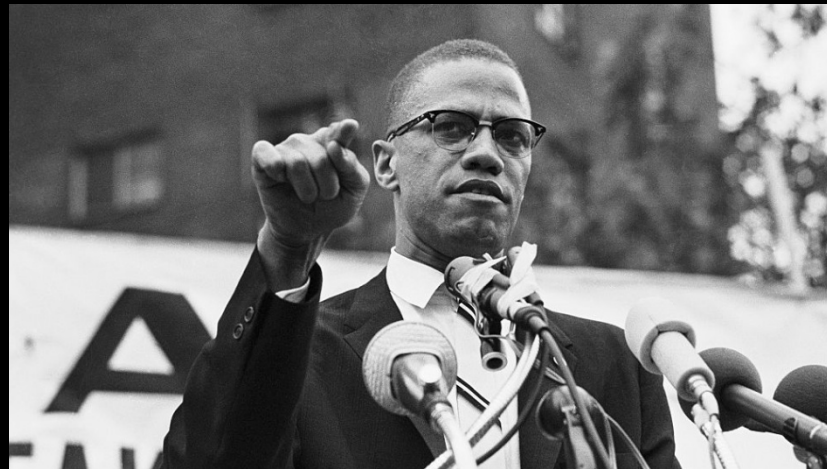


Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam

Malcolm X, the primary spokesman for the Nation of Islam until 1964, was the inspiration behind much of the Black Power Movement. He promoted racial pride, racial autonomy and self-determination. The ideologies of Malcolm and the Nation were influenced by the Honorable Marcus Garvey.

Nation of Islam – an Islamic and Black Nationalist movement founded in Detroit, MI by Wallace D. Fard Muhammad in 1930. Its mission was to “teach the downtrodden and defenseless Black people a thorough knowledge of God and of themselves”.

Self-Determination – To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves



Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael) and SNCC



The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee was founded in 1960 as an organization composed primarily of Black College Students who practiced peaceful protests. In 1966, **Stokely Carmichael** was elected as chairman of the organization. It was during this time that he coined the phrase **Black Power** as a political slogan. Speaking at a rally in Mississippi, he began leading the crowd in a chant of, "We Want Black Power", which stood in contrast to the traditional Civil Rights chant of, "We Want Freedom!"

The Black Panther Party

The Black Panther Party, originally called The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, was a political organization founded in 1966 by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale. Though the organization was established to contest police brutality in the community of Oakland, CA, it quickly grew into a nationwide phenomenon shifting its focus from self-defense to self-sufficiency through the implementation of community social programs.



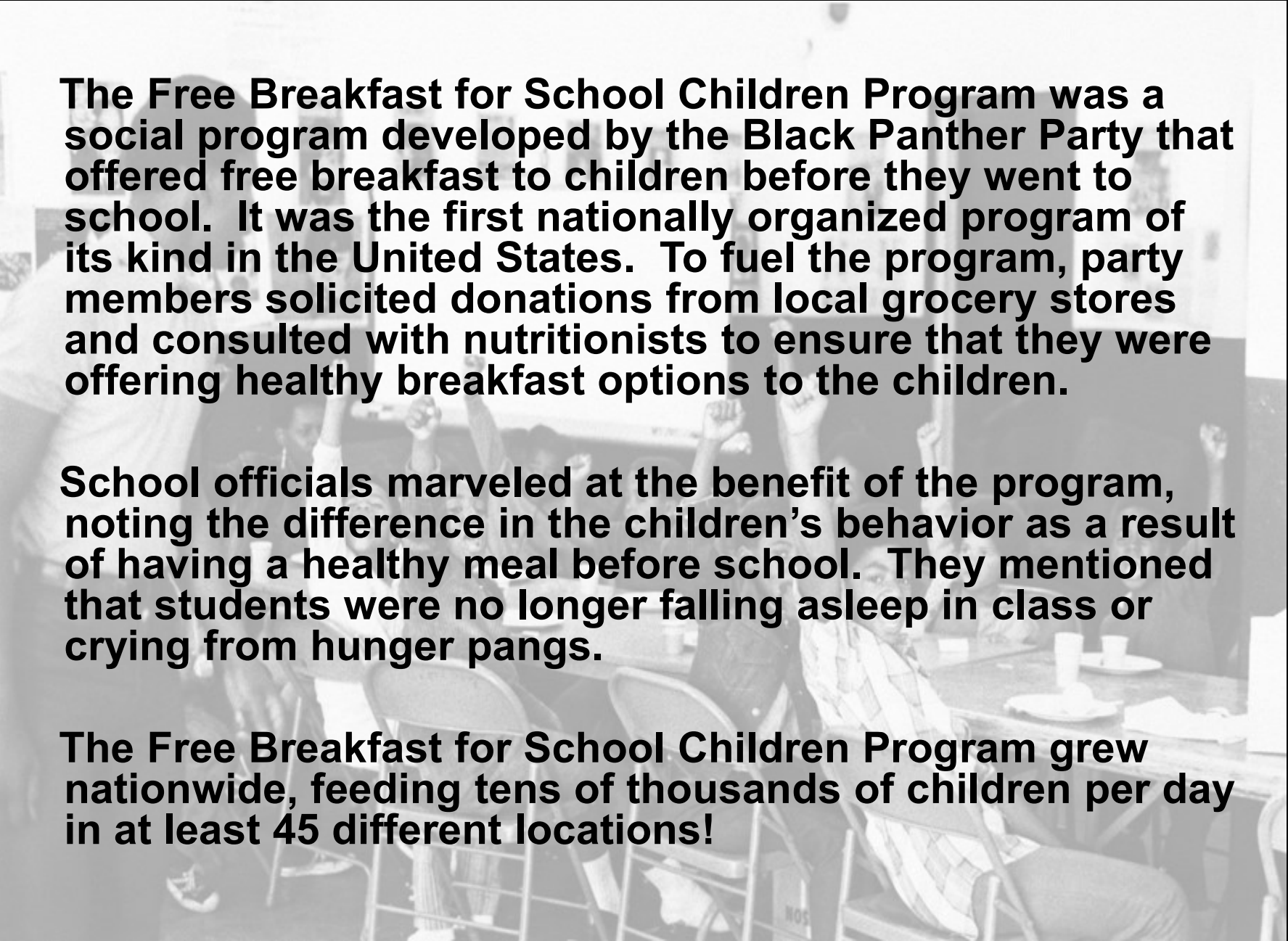
Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton



Black Panther Party Influences Federal Free Breakfast Program



In January of 1969, the Black Panther Party launched its Free Breakfast for School Children Program. It grew from feeding a handful of children in Oakland, CA to feeding tens of thousands of children nationwide!



The Free Breakfast for School Children Program was a social program developed by the Black Panther Party that offered free breakfast to children before they went to school. It was the first nationally organized program of its kind in the United States. To fuel the program, party members solicited donations from local grocery stores and consulted with nutritionists to ensure that they were offering healthy breakfast options to the children.

School officials marveled at the benefit of the program, noting the difference in the children's behavior as a result of having a healthy meal before school. They mentioned that students were no longer falling asleep in class or crying from hunger pangs.

The Free Breakfast for School Children Program grew nationwide, feeding tens of thousands of children per day in at least 45 different locations!

Unfortunately, not long after its development, **the FBI**, led by **J. Edgar Hoover**, decided that the program must be destroyed. Using **COINTELPRO** the FBI effectively dismantled the program by imposing government regulations and through the use of terroristic tactics. In fact J. Edgar Hoover is quoted as saying ***“The BCP (Breakfast for Children 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 Free Breakfast for School Children Program ended in the early 1970's.

In 1975, the USDA launched the National School Breakfast Program which served free or reduced breakfast to school children in need.

SO IF YOU GET FREE BREAKFAST OR LUNCH TODAY, THANK THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY!

COINTELPRO – CounterIntelligence Program – program conducted by *the FBI* from 1956 to 1971 that was used to discredit and neutralize organizations like the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Panther Party



J. Edgar Hoover

Resurgence

The Black Power Movement played a pivotal role in shaping the consciousness of Black America after the Civil Rights Movement. It spearheaded an emergence of Black Pride, Black Culture and Black Intellect. Many elements of the Black Power Movement can be seen mirrored in the Black Lives Matter Movement of today. For instance, both the Black Panther Party and the Black Lives Matter Movement were founded on the principal of ending police brutality against Black people. Furthermore, the Black Power Movement was able to generate allies of different ethnicities to be supportive of their cause. The Black Lives Matter Movement has successfully done the same. And though it is unfortunate that we are still engaging in this fight against systemic racism and the injustices that it births, it's exciting to see that focus on the Black Experience is resurging yet again.



Citations

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