

The Black Panther Party in Portland

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Warm-Up

(5-10 minutes)

Partner up into pairs of two!

Tell your partner about where you're from or a favorite place of yours, describing it in as much detail as you'd like!

Share any facts or history about the location too!

Switch afterwards

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(Build up comfort in sharing as well as good active listening skills)

headed by Kent Ford, meeting together and studying the writings of Malcolm X, to learn and discuss the issues in the country.

Later, in June 1969, a member of the study group was beaten and jailed. This led to Kent Ford publicly pronouncing his refusal for the group to stand idle, the famous phrase of “If they keep coming in with these fascist tactics, we’re going to defend ourselves.” He later would establish an unofficial chapter of the Black Panther Party stationed in Portland, which would be ratified officially later that year. The first of four total locations was opened.

The Portland Panthers would start programs like the Children’s Breakfast Program and free Health Clinics, providing aid and support to their community in a time of need. Despite this, the BPP was declared a “threat to national security” by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, leading to many Panthers being either killed or incarcerated, many of whom still remain imprisoned to this day.

Classroom Activity

(~50 minutes)

For the main classroom activity, we have included 3 options. Each activity will take about fifty minutes.

Option 1 - Location Hunt

You probably wouldn’t know the history of a building just by looking at it, especially if it deliberately isn’t being shared. The Black Panther Party had a huge impact across Portland; however, a lot of their accomplishments were often swept under the rug by historians and reporters. Today, it can be difficult to find information about the Party if you aren’t actively looking for it. This activity practices using research skills and critical analysis to find reliable information about the Black Panther Party’s impact in Portland.

Part 1- 5 minutes

Divide the class into small groups (2-4 students each, depending on the size of the class). You can do this simply by counting off, or with another quick activity. Assign each group one of the following locations.

Each location was referenced in the *Walking through Portland with a Panther: All Power!* At first glance, what do they know about these locations?

Part 2- 25 minutes

Using online resources, each group will research the black history attached to the location. [This link](#) briefly mentions the history of the Black Panther Party, and then discusses many of the locations on this list. Consider giving this article to the students first to get an idea of keywords to search for, then allow them to find sources on their own and/or provide them with the links at the end of this document.

Part 3- 10 minutes

After each group has finished, pair up the small groups to reflect on and compare their research. When pairing up the small groups, consider grouping the locations by similarity or difference. For example, pair up groups with the health clinics together. Because they have similar topics, these groups can directly compare their research. If they found different information, discuss the keywords they searched for and the credibility of the sites they used.

Part 4- 10 minutes

Finally, reconvene the class as a full group and discuss patterns and trials the Party encountered. How does the Black Panther Party connect to these locations? Are these locations still here? What might that say about progress battling disenfranchisement and displacement in Portland? If the class has learned about Black Panther Party chapters outside of Portland, how do the Portland chapter's actions compare to other cities?

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Part 2- 10 minutes

Each student will interview the other about their chosen location— what do they know about the history of that place? If it's a building, what used to be there? What are the racial and class demographics of the area? Why are those the demographics of this area? Did anything else important happen — historically, personally — in that area? Why did they pick that location? Spend about five minutes on each student. During this time, students should make note of any gaps in their knowledge— at least three things they wish they knew about the history of their important place.

Part 3- 10 minutes

Students will then independently (or together, if they prefer) research the answers to these questions. Good places to start, such as demographic maps of regions or historical archives of local papers, are linked at the end of this document. As they do so, they should take note of 3 ways the history of this place (whether or not they knew it already) connects to their story.

Part 4- 10 minutes

Students should then spend a few minutes compiling their partner's notes on them, their research into the place, and their own story, and turn it into a short, 2 minute performance. The story should include some additional context gained from the research or discussion of the location, and the context should connect to the story in some way.

Part 5- 10 minutes

Then, share the presentation with their partner one at a time. After both have gone, talk with each other about how it went. Did this exercise change your relationship with each other? How? Did it change your relationship with the place or lit

How do you find your news today? Do you read a specific publication or do you get it off of social media? How do you decide if a news source is reliable?

Part 4- 10 minutes

Self-reflection: Students will now be given ten minutes to write down their thoughts on this activity. Here are some questions to focus on:

Did you experience any shift in your biases today?

What aspect of today's activity did you find challenging?

Why do you think that was?

Where did you experience success in today's discussion?

Part 5 (optional)- 20 minutes

Bring the class back together and have them share their answers with the whole class. This can be done multiple ways, either popcorn style which allows greater discussion or have each group share one idea with minimal discussion. Writing the ideas on the board can also be beneficial.

Supplemental Resources

Activity 1:

Locations in the script:

Albina neighborhood ([displacement \(Oregon History Project\)](#))

Highland United Church of Christ (Joy Christian Learning Center) ([breakfast program \(Oregon Hunger\)](#))

Vanport ([Vanport flood \(NPR\)](#), [Vanport Mosaic archives](#))

Irving Park ([Albina Riot \(Oregon History Project\)](#))

Medical clinics: ([New York University \(importance of medical clinics\)](#))

Fred Hampton People's Free Health Clinic ([Reed Magazine](#))

Emanuel Hospital (construction displaced Fred Hampton Clinic)

Malcolm X People's Dental Clinic (moved once)

Kaiser Dental Clinic (not mentioned in the script, but was the site of the second Malcolm

Play's Setting and Time:

Scene:

The streets of Albina, a neighborhood in the City of Portland Oregon. A bus bench and bus stop sign at the corner of North Or Russel Street. Williams Ave. and

This is 9th Avenue running this way, and Alberta Street crossing Mill street, across that, and Highland School, and in the way, Kenan College, and in the way, we will find the University of Portland, and in the way, we will find the United Church of Christ, and in the way, we will find the Highland preacher, crooked as a barrel of snakes, but he let us serve our breakfast, and in the way, we will find the Minister, and in the way, we will find the woman, and in the way, we will find our second course was over, here, now in the

Activity 2

Demographic maps: Try starting with these, and research the information that you find. Why are people organized like this? What happened to the demographics that used to be on this land?

- 2020 census racial maps:

<https://mtgis-portal.geo.census.gov/arcgis/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=2566121a73de463995ed2b2fd7ff6eb7>

- Nytimes Mapping Segregation:

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/07/08/us/census-race-map.html>

- Native land maps: <https://native-land.ca/>

Redlining maps: <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=5/39.1/-94.58>

Oregon records: Try looking up specific addresses, people, or businesses. What kind of information is recorded? Who isn't included? What used to happen at this address? What buildings used to be here?

State of Oregon historical records: <https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/Pages/records.aspx>

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