

The Black Panther Party in Portland

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Warm-Up

(5-10 minutes)

Option 1

- 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

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

Option 2

- Partner up into pairs of two!
- Tell your partner about where your ancestors are from and what history they may have
- Share anything you wished you knew about them that you don't if any
- Switch afterwards

(Potentially prepare for a racialized discussion and practice active listening skills!)

Information/Contextual Piece

(10 minutes)

In October 1966, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense was founded in Oakland, California by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. The party was a response to the centuries of disenfranchisement of Black Americans and the police violence in the local Black neighborhoods. Wielding a ten-point program that listed their goals of equality in the realms of employment, housing, and education along with freedom for political prisoners and the end of police brutality, the BPP was a strong and firm statement in the people's refusal to accept their unfair and inhumane treatment.

In 1968, when Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated, riots happened across the country and wild and powerful actions were taken in cities like Chicago. In comparison, Portland, Oregon, was comparatively tame, with only minor disturbances rearing their heads. What did come to be, however, was a group of around twenty disillusioned young Black people,

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?

Option 2 - Personal Performance

In the style of *Walking Through Portland with a Panther: All Power!*, students will research a place — a building, neighborhood, city — connecting their own personal history with the history of the place. This activity helps students practice research, interviewing, and presentation skills, while also emphasizing the importance of learning about the history of where we live.

Part 1- 5-10 minutes

Divide the class into pairs and have them take a few minutes to think of and talk about a story they have that's rooted in a location important to them. It could be an urban legend, a summer camp story, a piece of local history, a story about their home, etc. Each student should have told a story to the other by the end of the ten minutes.

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 or understanding of that location? Did it change the way you thought about that story? How? Is there anything you still wish you knew?

Option 3 - Comparative Newspaper Research

Link to Black Panther: [05 no 15 1-20 oct 10 1970 \(marxists.org\)](https://www.marxists.org/usa/black-panther/1970/10/10/1970-10-10-1970-pg12-portland-pigs-attempt-to-murder-albert-williams) -10/10/1970 pg12- "Portland Pigs Attempt to Murder Albert Williams

Link to Oregonian (will need to use library login) [Document | America's Historical Newspapers | Readex \(oclc.org\)](#) -10/08/1970 pg62- "Dismissal Plea Denied Police Attack Suspect"

Link to the typed-up articles: [Articles](#)

Note for Teachers: Some of the language can be seen as offensive for some students. It's important to stress that language will change depending on the bias of the author. These articles also deal with issues of police brutality and racism.

Part 1- 5 minutes

Teachers, please read the following to students. On February 18, 1970, Albert Williams, age 19, was shot by police. Williams lived and was later tried for attacking the police officer. Here you will read two articles, one from the Oregonian and one from the Black Panther newspaper. Read each article carefully and write down any differences in the language between the two articles.

Part 2- 5 minutes

In partners or small groups (ideally no more than 3), discuss what you noticed about the articles. Some sentence starters:

- I noticed that this article used ___ when the other article did not.
 - I think the author did this because ___.
- I believe that ___ because ___.
- This reminds me of ___ because ___.
- I think this article was written from the perspective of someone who _____.
 - I think this because _____.
- I think this article was written with the intention of _____.

Part 3- 10 minutes

In these same small groups discuss the following questions.

- How does knowing these differing perspectives impact our understanding of the story?
- How can the words used influence bias in news stories? How can we identify them? Can we have a neutral point of view?
- Think back to a time when the words you chose, or didn't choose to say, mattered. How did those words spurred a reaction? How did you make the decision and how did others respond?

- 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.

Core Standards

- Social Justice Standards
 - Diversity 8 DI.9-12.8 I respectfully express curiosity about the history and lived experiences of others and exchange ideas and beliefs in an open-minded way.
 - Justice 13 JU.9-12.13 - I can explain the short and long-term impact of biased words and behaviors and unjust practices, laws and institutions that limit the rights and freedoms of people based on their identity groups.
 - Justice 15 JU.9-12.15 - I can identify figures, groups, events and a variety of strategies and philosophies relevant to the history of social justice around the world.
- National Core Art Standards for Theatre
 - Anchor Standard 11-b : Use basic theatre research methods to better understand the social and cultural background of a drama/theatre work.
 - Anchor Standard 2-a: Explore the function of history and culture in the development of a dramatic concept through a critical analysis of original ideas in a drama/theatre work.

Supplemental Resources

Activity 1:



- ★ Highland United Church of Christ
- ★ Fred Hampton People's Free Health Clinic and Emanuel Hospital
- ★ First site of the Malcolm X Dental Clinic
- ★ Second site of the Malcolm X Dental Clinic (Kaiser Dental Clinic)
- ★ Irving Park

Source: Vanport Mosaic map of Kent Ford's legacy tour

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 X Clinic)

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 Williams Ave. and Russel Street.

This is 9th Avenue running this way, and Alberta Street crossing, that was Highland School, which is now King School, we'll get back to that later, we will go down to Prescott Street to Highland United Church of Christ, I have some stories about that preacher, crooked as a barrel of snakes, but he let us serve our breakfast program there, from there we will go down to Fremont Street and then over to Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., which was then Union Avenue... Our second office was over there, now it is an empty lot... Okay, well, okay... You can follow me. Get you some water.

practices were racially motivated and effective. In 1919, the Portland Realty Board adopted a rule declaring it unethical for an agent to sell property to either Negro or Oriental people in a White neighborhood. The houses in Albina were among the first owned by Portland's African Americans. In 1942, a large community housing development, called Vanport, was built in outer North Portland to house shipyard workers. The 1948 flood destroyed Vanport and displaced over 16,000 people. The African American residents who lost their homes faced limited housing options and many who moved back to Albina rented the aging homes or apartments vacated when white Portlanders moved to the suburbs.

Baldwin said were happening right here on the streets. I saw it all, police brutality, poverty, hungry little children, education barriers, then I saw it explode in the 67' riots - Irving Park right here, they were calling these kind of demonstrations "Urban Unrest," but it was just the people gathering to talk about systemic racism, the jobless problem in the Black community here in Portland - civil rights, poverty and unemployment, institutionalized discrimination, and police brutality was the agenda, and Eldridge Cleaver Minister of just Bippity Bop... Okay, in this block, down farther over on Vancouver Avenue, we had our Clinics The Fred Hampton People's Free Health Clinic, the building is gone - Emmanuel Hospital expansion - just at the North corner of Vancouver and Russell. We did thousands of sickle cell tests, high blood pressure tests and Saturday we had a mother and baby Wellness clinic now over here, just on North Russell was the Malcolm X Dental Clinic, it was first on Williams Ave around the corner in a building... We also did sickle cell testing in the schools, this was all free, we didn't get a dime - I mean didn't get paid for it - and it was free for the people. The doctors volunteered their time and

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://mtgjis-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>
- Oregonian collection with Historical Records:
<https://multcolib.org/resource/oregonian-collection-historical-archives>
- Oregon Journal: <https://multcolib.org/resource/oregon-journal-1902-1982>
- The Historical Oregonian: <https://multcolib.org/resource/historical-oregonian-1861-1987>
- Historic Oregon newspapers: <https://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/>
- Oregon school profiles: <https://www.ode.state.or.us/data/reportcard/reports.aspx>

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