

*“The Legacy of the Black Panther Party”*

Rose C. Thevenin

Book collection is more than just a hobby to me, it is an art form which helps me to preserve the many works of perhaps one of the most radical organization during the late 1960s. Organized in October 1966 by Bobby G. Seale and Huey P. Newton, the Black Panther Party For Self-Defense has remained one of the most controversial organizations in the late 1960s. Its paramilitary stance, inflammatory rhetoric, protest, social and political activities have been the focus of debates that have centered on its leadership, organizational structure and legacy. In 1970, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover considered the Black Panther Party the “greatest single threat” to the internal security of the United States government. I have spent the last six years gathering a collection of Black Panther Party works to examine some of the many reasons justifying and challenging such a conclusion. I hope to later publish my findings in my dissertation entitled, “The Greatest Single Threat, A Study Of The Black Panther Party.”

In 1997, I began writing to the FBI requesting information through the Freedom Of Information Act. In 1999, the FBI released to me 10,000 pages of declassified pages on the organization in accordance with Freedom Of Information Act guidelines. My FBI collection features FBI agent reports, newsclips, daily and travel itineraries of Black Panther Party leaders and members. My interest in the Black Panther Party has guided me to Oakland California where I scoured local bookstores in search of out of print books and materials published by the Party. Through such a trip, I acquired two out of print first edition copies of the works of George Jackson, a Black Panther Party member killed in 1971 after an alleged prison escape attempt. I also interviewed the Black Panther Party’s “Revolutionary Artist” responsible for almost all of the Black Panther Party’s artwork.

I have also traveled to New York City, Washington D.C and Detroit to collect pamphlets published by the Black Panther Party, including court documents, autobiographical accounts and oral interviews with former Black Panther Party leaders and members. Most of my autobiographical works are signed by the Black Panther Party’s leaders David Hilliard, Bobby Seale, and Elaine Brown. I also have more than one copy of original works of Black Panther Party members because I like to collect different editions of the same work. Perhaps my greatest acquisition is a complete collection of The Black Panther Party’s newspaper from 1974 to 1977. I have a total number of 114 consecutive copies of the Black Panther Party’s newspaper documenting the leadership of Elaine Brown, the only black woman to serve as the Chairwoman of the Black Panther Party.

I have endeavored to track researchers around the country researching the Black Panther Party and I obtained a copy of the latest work on the Black Panther Party by Charles E. Jones. Although the work is a collection of essays, I have acquired almost all the signatures of the contributors to the Jones volume. My collection also features general works on the Black Panther Party including periodicals containing interviews and editorials by Black Panther Party members and leaders. I have documentaries and films which capture the Black Panther Party during its prime. I enjoy preserving the historical

legacy of the Black Panther Party and will continue scouring book shelves around the country to acquire their many works.